



Chinese Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in the United States

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To my late Mother and Father

PREFACE

During my Ph.D. studies, I embarked on a journey that would fundamentally shape the trajectory of my academic pursuits. Throughout this transformative period, I had the opportunity to engage in back-and-forth email exchanges with Prof. Joseph S. Nye Jr. which would significantly impact my understanding of ‘Soft Power’ and ‘Public Diplomacy’ (PD). Arguably, the pivotal figure in my academic journey was my esteemed mentor, Prof. Nazir Hussain, who ventured me into this unfamiliar terrain. Emphasizing the significance of shedding light on an issue hitherto unexplored in our region, Prof. Hussain instilled in me a profound sense of purpose in pursuing research that I otherwise would not have undertaken.

My quest for understanding the intricacies of ‘Soft Power’ and PD took me on a learning journey to China, a nation known for its cultural capital and 5000 years of uninterrupted civilization. This experience came from the 2nd Asia-Africa Youth Festival, a momentous event that brought together participants from thirty countries in Asia and Africa, including public diplomats and sinologists.

During this exciting cultural exchange, I interacted with individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, each offering unique insights into China’s soft power and PD. The visit included engaging workshops on China’s transformative Belt and Road Initiative BRI and excursions to historical sites in Beijing and Xian, cultural exhibitions, visits to universities, and explorations of China’s cultural heritage. Throughout my time

in China, I had a one-on-one experience with the nation's viewpoint on soft power and the strategic application of PD.

The diversity and extensive field of PD scholarship and US-China relations cannot be summed up in a book or volume. This study, therefore, should be considered a small effort to understand one aspect of the intricate US-China intricate. I believe this study will contribute meaningfully to understanding US-China relations and shed light on the potential of non-coercive instruments of power in shaping the great power relations in our interconnected world.

Islamabad, Pakistan

Bilal Zubair

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This research is the outcome of years of study while pursuing my Ph.D. I further expanded it by taking valuable input from my teachers and peers. I especially acknowledge the guidance and support of my Ph.D. supervisor and mentor, Prof. Nazir Hussain, the former Director School of Politics and International Relations and former Dean Faculty of Social Sciences Quaid-i-Azam-University Islamabad. His casting of care, timely feedback, and unrestricted access to his guidance surpass all imaginations. His impression would continue to be the leading source of inspiration for my future academic life. I want to extend my gratitude to Prof. Kuik ChengChwee, Head, Centre for Asian Studies (iKAS), Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), National University of Malaysia (UKM). His acute understanding and valuable input enabled me to reorganize my work into a book form. I will always remember discussions with Dr. Fatemeh Hippler, a research fellow of the Hannah Arendt Institute at Dresden University. This gave me valuable insight into cultural diplomacy and soft power. My special thanks to Dr. Sadia Nasir for motivating and supporting me to complete this book. I am also thankful to Dr. Asma Khawaja for consistently supporting my endeavors.

I have always cherished my family's unwavering support and love, especially my wife, Neel Kanwal, and my adorable sons, Nazif Bilal and Nayel Bilal, who always keep my energies and spirits high. My gratitude to my brother (Talal) and sister (Sehar) for standing beside me for all these years.

During the years of completing this book, I have been guided and enriched by my teachers at the School of Politics and International Relations Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, my friends and worthy colleagues at the National Defence University (NDU), who have directly or indirectly supported me throughout this journey. My special thanks to the Dean Faculty of Contemporary Studies (FCS) at National Defence University, Prof Dr. Zulfiar Khan reminding me to remain committed to pursuing excellence in research. I must thank my student, Mr. Rafay Shaffi Khan, for his untiring assistance in compiling my research in book form.

In the end, my thanks to the Palgrave McMillian team, especially Jacob Dreyer and Abarna Antonyraj, who have been very supportive and thoroughly guided me during the publication of this book.

Islamabad

Fall 2023

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Anything But China
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Development Bank
BBC	British Broadcasting Association
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa
CCTV	China Central Television
CDDC	China Daily Distribution Corporation
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CI	Confucius Institutes
CMG	Chinese Media Group
CNBC	Consumer News and Business Channel
CNN	Cable News Network
CPAFFC	Chinese People Association with Foreign Countries
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CRI	China Radio International
CSIS	Center of Strategic and International Studies
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPD	Integrated Public Diplomacy
IRT	International Relations Theory
ITERO	Intercultural Experiences and Short-Term Overseas Professional Training
LAC	Line of Actual Control
MPD	Mediated Public Diplomacy

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPR	National Public Radio
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PD	Public Diplomacy
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PR	Public Relations
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SCD	Social and Cultural Dialogue
SCT&TP	Summer Travel and Teaching Program
SIM	Strategic Issue Management
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USIA	United States Information Agency
USNSS	United States National Security Strategy
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VNRs	Video News Releases
VOA	Voice of America
WION	World is One News
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZTE	Zhong Xing Telecommunication Equipment Corporation

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The unfolded new great power rivalry between the United States and China is viewed as the most consequential occurrence of our time. Antagonistic perspectives regarding this relationship swayed the discourse on US–China relation and its impact on international politics. Unlike the great power competition of the twentieth century, war may not and nor would it determine the protagonist in this rivalry. This is a multi-layered relationship that goes way beyond the conventional geopolitical and strategic competition. Instead, what characterizes this contemporary great power interaction is a ‘managed competition,’ where the zero-sum game is avoidable. To contemplate the dynamics of US–China relations, it is essential to recognize that geopolitical and geo-economic factors have already shaped their complex interactions. Most scholarly works on US–China bilateral relations investigate patterns of new great power competitions, especially considering China’s economic and military ascendance. However, my particular interest lies in understanding the US–China relations from the prism of soft power and public diplomacy, which involves influence, persuasion, image, reputation management, and fostering relations and building networks. While focusing on military and economic strength remains relevant, acknowledging the role of ‘Soft Power’ and PD is equally indispensable in comprehending the intricate relationship between these two great powers.

For China, arguably the most significant challenge to its position comes from the global perception. China's search to balance its rise and global perception has always been a puzzle to be resolved. To address the reputational deficit, China has worked proactively toward showing a more loveable image on the global stage. On October 17, 2007, President Hu Jintao's, in his speech to the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party CPC, established 'Cultural Soft Power' (文化软实力) at the official stage of Chinese politics. During the 18th National Congress of the CPC from November 8 to November 15, 2012, PD (公共外交) and the 'Cultural Diplomacy' (文化外) were incorporated as important carriers of 'Soft Power' (软实力). In the following, 19th National Congress of the CPC from October 18th to October 24th, China institutionalized Soft Power by incorporating it in the constitution of the CCP. Through the constitutional reforms, China has internalized the 'Soft Power' as a significant strategy and PD as an essential instrument to promote its global image.

China's urgency to incorporate soft power and PD in external relations warrants careful examination. China has developed rapidly since President Ding Xiaoping introduced economic reforms in 1978. A sustained economic growth averaging 9% since 1978 helped China's transformation from an impoverished nation to an economic powerhouse. China's robust economic credentials enabled it to modernize infrastructure, improve human resources, and build a potent military power to share the ranks of great powers globally. its unprecedented rise could not have gone unnoticed. In the 1990s, the US academia—initiated a debate on China's rise as a viable contender against the United States and a subsequent threat on the global stage.¹ Many American scholars saw a probable power shift in the international system that could end the US preponderance in global affairs. Political leadership in the United States gradually recognized China's increasing power as a worrisome development.² The US academia contested with their Chinese counterparts whether China's rise

¹ Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Charm: Implications of Chinese Soft Power" *Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief*, 47 (June 2006): 6.

² Shogo Suzuki, "Chinese Soft Power, Insecurity Studies, Myopia, and Fantasy" *Third World Quarterly*, 30:4 (June 2009): 780.

would be peaceful or disruptive and whether would it challenge the US-led International order.³ Both countries recognize China's rise as a great power and pronounce it with countervailing narratives. Chinese leadership envisages China's rise as a development enabling a more rule-based international environment, while United States leadership considers China a revisionist power.

Gradually, a bipartisan consensus in the United States evolved in the last decade, considering China's rise as a peril to the US superpower status.⁴ Following the dissolution of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), the previously unchallenged unipolar dominance of the United States has been thrown into uncertainty. This shift paved the way for the emergence of discussions surrounding the 'Rising China' phenomenon during the 1990s in the United States, which subsequently evolved into debates centered on the perceived threat posed by China.⁵ Meanwhile, a countervailing narrative of 'China's Rise' unfolded in Chinese international relations scholarship. Chinese political leadership and academia were swift to counteract the narrative that China's rise was aimed at disrupting the prevailing international order or dethroning the United States.

Initially, Zheng Bijian,⁶ a prominent Chinese scholar and politician, conceived the idea of 'Peaceful Rise' (和平崛起), which brought Rising China discourse in Chinese official policy perspective,⁷ spoken frequently

³ Zhao Quansheng and Liu Guoli, "China Rising: Theoretical Understanding and Global Response" in Zhao Quansheng and Liu Guoli, ed., *Managing the China challenge. Global perspectives* (New York: Routledge: 2009): 7.

⁴ Defense Planning Guidelines: 1994–1992, Washington, D.C. www.archives.gov/files/declassification/iscap/pdf/2008-003-docs1-12.pdf, accessed on May 15, 2017; and Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: The Plan to Defeat America* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2000): 12.

⁵ William H. Overholt used the term Rise of China in his 1993 article "The Rise of China" in a Foreign Affairs article. Later In 1998 Nicholas D. Kristof book titled *the Rise of China* designated China as a rising power. Whereas, a book by Michael B. Yahuda titled *The China Threat* argued that China constitutes threat to the South East Asian state.

⁶ Zheng Bijian is an established Chinese academician, scholar and a politician who has served on various important positions at of the CCP and Senior Advisor to Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs. As of 2023, he is chair of China Reform Forum based in Beijing.

⁷ Zheng Bijian, "China's Peaceful Rise to Great Power Status" *Foreign Affairs*, 84:5 (September–October 2005): 19.

by Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. Chinese political leadership articulated China's 'Peaceful Rise' contrary to the US narrative of the 'China Threat.' The Chinese narrative was an attempt to dismiss the evolving 'China Threat' debate in the United States and project a favorable Chinese image at the international level in line with Deng Xiaoping's 'Keeping a Low Profile' dictum.⁸ Though the 'Peaceful Rise' projected a desire for a peaceful economic development course and integration into international society, Chinese leaders were wary of the implications of the term 'Rise.'⁹ Keeping mindful of the term 'Rise' that could attract unwarranted discomfort and represent negative connotation to the means and end of China's progression, Chinese academia introduced a more tenable perspective of 'Development' vis-à-vis China's rise.

In 2004, China's Premier Hu Jintao used the term 'Peaceful Development' (和平发展), substituting 'Peaceful Rise,' which has since become the official Chinese position on external affairs to dispel unwanted attention abroad. China's 'Peaceful Development' is rooted in a historical narrative of peaceful coexistence and a harmonious world emphasizing internal development and responsibility toward the developing world and the international society. The 'Peaceful Development' narrative laid the economic, sociocultural, and environmental concerns that are at the forefront of its interaction with the global community.¹⁰ China's tone of 'Peaceful Development' and its pro-globalization posture seek a 'Harmonious World for Sustainable Development of Global Community.'¹¹ The 'Peaceful Development' emphasizes that China's rise, partly military and economic, also constitutes a peaceful political and cultural rise of a civilizational state. China officially stands to the commitment to

⁸ Zhang Weiwei, *The China Wave Rise of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack: World Century Publishing Corporation, 2012): 15.

⁹ Wu Guoguang, "The Peaceful Emergence of a Great Power?" *Social Research*, 73:1 (Spring 2006): 320.

¹⁰ David Scott, *the Chinese Century: The Challenge to Global Order* (London: Macmillan, 2008): 5.

¹¹ Yongnian Zheng and Sow Keat Tok, "Harmonious Society' and 'Harmonious World': China's Policy Discourse Under Hu Jintao" Briefing Series-26, *China Policy Institute* (October 2007): 11.

‘Peaceful Development,’ projecting China’s development as a responsible and peaceful power and emphasizing its intangible power sources.¹² However, the critics of Chinese Rise argue that jargon like ‘Peaceful Development’ and ‘Harmonious World’ (和谐世界) could not fade away the threat posed by the ‘Rise of China.’ Many Western Sino skeptics feel that the Chinese ‘Harmonious World’ view neither reflects its foreign policy actions nor has it improved China’s global image.¹³ Consequently, the ‘Peaceful Development’ narrative seems odd with Chinese economic practices and ensuing military modernizations which pose a threat to regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Taking account of the complexity of the issue, this book has tried to assess China’s response to the ‘China Threat’ narrative in the United States; and the non-kinetic policy option to promote a ‘Peaceful Development’ policy. This study’s argument is that the conspicuous rise of PD in public relations management between governments and foreign publics has become fundamentally crucial in modern-day statecraft. Recognizing the importance of PD, China has institutionalized it as a soft power resource to improve China’s global image. Most studies on Chinese PD have used cultural diplomacy and soft power to evaluate its impact on foreign relations. The other avenues of PD, namely national branding and mediated public diplomacy, have somewhat been less explored in the existing scholarship. This book aims to address this gap.

This book will explain three strands of PD: mediated public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and nation branding while elucidating their distinct roles in establishing China’s efforts to address the trust deficit in the United States. It extensively explores the significance of PD in China’s soft power strategy, aiming to portray China’s ascent as peaceful and focused on development. Additionally, it analyzes how China employs PD to engage the American public and enhance the overall relationship between the two countries.

¹² Bingguo, Dai, “Persisting with Taking the Path of Peaceful Development,” *Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, December 6, 2010.

¹³ Evan S. Medeiros, *China’s International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009): 7; and, Tang Shiping, “Projecting China’s Foreign Policy: Determining Factors and Scenarios” in Jae Ho Chung, ed., *Charting China’s Future: Political, Social, and International Dimensions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006): 129.

Before exploring China's Soft Power and PD, the book explains a balanced account of the evolution of the 'Rise of China's narrative in the Western¹⁴ and Chinese international relations scholarship. The interplay of international relations theory and existing scholarship on the subject receives a diverse readership for this book. I see it benefitting PD practitioners, researchers, and scholars of US–China relations. For scholars and researchers, this study unravels critical areas of PD practices that need further research and exploration. For practitioners, this research provides insight into the importance of PD as an essential tool of external statecraft to engage foreign publics. Practitioners could also learn the growing importance of modern technology, mass communication, and branding in contemporary PD. For the practitioner and scholars of PD, chapter three, four, and five are particularly important, which outlines the structured application of three interrelated components of integrated public diplomacy, namely, relational public diplomacy, mediated public diplomacy, and nation branding by China in the United States.

From the research viewpoint, I have taken qualitative and open-ended examinations on how China practices PD in the United States. Research in the field of PD is an uphill task, which requires surveys, access to primary sources, and logistical impediments, among other constraints. Similarly, the continually evolving and interdisciplinary area of PD requires carefully examining and selecting suitable frameworks that satiate the research requirements. To undertake a methodological path, this study approaches the research problem by incorporating theory and framework, examination of data, and an analytical approach.

For comprehensive qualitative analysis, this work contextualized data, including public surveys, official and non-official documents, archives, policy-makers' memories, official statements, speeches, surveys, conference proceedings, and data policy reports by the government and private think tanks. In addition, the important documented events and incidences televised and reported on social media are analyzed and discussed. Particularly important are the speeches of Chinese Presidents at the National Congress of the CCP and the US Presidents' policy statements which are

¹⁴ For the purpose of this study the 'West' or 'Western' has been used to denote the culturally and ideologically knitted Western Civilization that includes North America and Western Europe and also Australia. However, it is also interchangeably used for the United States of America in relationship to indicate its perception regarding the 'Rise of China.'

part of the analysis. This study also incorporated statements of government officials, experts, scholars, academics, and practitioners of PD in US–China relations.

The book outlines six chapters, each addressing a key research question related to China’s PD and soft power strategies in the United States.

Chapter 2 introduces the ‘Integrated Public Diplomacy’ concept based on soft power principles. It conceptualizes soft power as a resource and PD as an instrument by the governments that channels it into dividends for building trust, bridging gaps, and improving the country’s image. It highlights how modern diplomacy has evolved, enabling governments to communicate directly with foreign publics using modern communication channels. Lastly, it emphasizes the importance of PD as a crucial tool for China’s soft power.

Chapter 3 discusses the ‘Rise of China’ from American and Chinese perspectives. It traces the progression of the ‘China Threat’ discourse within the United States, examining the US–China rapprochement and exploring how this relationship ultimately led to policy shifts in successive US administrations. The Chapter further provides perspectives from Chinese academics on the Rise of China in Chinese International Relations Theory. Chinese political elite response was evident from sensitivity to the ‘Rising China’ narrative in the United States. It further elaborates on the role of the CCP and Chinese political elite in projecting soft power as national policy in domestic and international contexts to counter the Rising China narrative.

Chapter 4 expands upon the first component of Integrated Public Diplomacy, Mediated Public Diplomacy. It examines how global mass media, especially internet-based social media, have been leveraged to influence American public opinion about China. This Chapter outlines the rise of Chinese mass media and its subsidiaries in the United States. Further it explores the use of Western mass and social media by China to speak out to the American audience.

Chapter 5 focuses on nation branding and its significance in the contemporary PD. It explores China’s efforts to improve its image through nation branding campaigns, examining the sources of ‘Brand China’ and internal and external factors affecting these campaigns. This Chapter examines the impact of nation branding on the inflow of FDI, tourism, and international students from the United States. In addition, this chapter also explores China’s marketing strategy to promote its products and image in the United States.

Chapter 6 evaluates the role of relational public diplomacy in Chinese PD. It examines six characteristics of relational and cultural diplomacy, which include (a) relationship development, (b) identifying similarity and common interest between the public of messengers and recipients, (c) commitment, credibility and respect, (d) ‘trust-building’ (e) cultivating participatory initiatives from the leadership level to ordinary citizens (f) continuity and sustainability.

Chapter 7 analyzes the IPD model’s components and their impact on Chinese soft power influence in the United States. It includes a qualitative assessment of integrated public diplomacy’s effectiveness in enhancing China’s image and cultural appreciation among the American public.

In summary, the book examines how China strategically employs soft power and PD to enhance its image and influence among the American public and how these efforts are perceived and received in the United States.



CHAPTER 2

Conceptualizing Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

A compelling argument about the evolving dynamics of international relations is put forth by Prof Nye in his seminal work, *the Paradox of American Power*. Nye reckons that the traditional ‘Hard Power,’ characterized by military might and coercive measures, has been losing its effectiveness in achieving foreign policy objectives. To address this shift, Nye introduces ‘Soft Power,’ which is the capability of attraction and persuasion through intangible means rather than explicit threats or exchanges. Nye argues that ‘Soft Power’ draws on three sources, namely the culture, political institutions, and foreign policy of any country.¹ It provides a country with a potent recipe for successful foreign policy implementation regardless of its size or ideology. Over the past three decades, ‘Soft Power’ has been the prominent term for using intangible sources of national power into effect. Nye’s advocacy of ‘Soft Power’ has broadened the understanding of power in the international system. As a result, new scholarship on the nature and scope of power has emerged. The terms ‘Smart Power’ (a combination of hard and soft power), and ‘Sharp Power’ (is application of a range of diplomatic activities to undermine any

¹ Joseph Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 8.

political system) explain various power tools at the disposal of the state to obtain desired outcomes.

‘Soft Power’ has a Western orientation and is rooted in the Western liberal ideas of democracy, free market economy, and human rights.² Especially it resonates with the ideas of a culturally free American society governed under political democratic governing principles. China approaches the concept differently. As a rising power, China recognizes the significance of ‘Soft Power’ in shaping the relations between states and non-state actors. Chinese leaders acknowledged the relative weakness of Chinese culture compared to Western international culture in shaping global perceptions. President Hu Jintao for instance had stressed the importance of elevating governance and political norms while enhancing the capacity for agenda-setting, thereby bolstering China’s positive image to boost its ‘Soft Power.’³ China has invested significantly in developing ‘Soft Power’ to bolster its global image and influence vis-à-vis the West. These investments have been made in Confucius Institutions (CI)’s, globalization of Chinese media and export of Chinese cultural influence. The carrier of Chinese ‘Soft Power’ externally is the strategic use of PD which serves as a tool to connect with foreign audiences and build positive relationships.

DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The primary function of diplomacy is the execution of foreign policy mainly through emissaries and envoys. It enables governments to interact with foreign governments, organizations and institutions. Traditionally, diplomacy was mainly concerned with representing, negotiating and reporting.⁴ Adam Watson puts diplomacy as a ‘negotiation of political entities which acknowledge each other’s independence.’⁵ He added that traditional diplomacy is aimed at gathering information from abroad;

² Eric lee, “The Rise and Fall of Soft Power” *Foreign Policy*, August 20, 2018.

³ Issac Stone Fish, “Hu Jintao on China Loosing the Cultural War” January 3, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/01/03/hu-jintao-on-china-losing-the-culture-wars/>, accessed on June 20, 2022.

⁴ Eytan Gilboa, “Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 12:2 (June 2001): 16.

⁵ Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005): 21.

analyzing the report by the respective foreign office; devising a strategy based on that information; and, lastly, ‘communicating and explaining a government’s decisions to another government.’⁶ Traditional diplomacy has focused on state-to-state relations with little influence on the foreign public. In this context, the traditional diplomacy primarily aims to engage with state officials through state-authorized procedures, formal meetings undisclosed to the general public.⁷ Thus conventional diplomacy is highly elevated, sluggish, interpersonal, and entrenched in secrecy.⁸ Before the Cold War, traditional diplomacy was mainly conducted between the allies and seldom between the adversaries.⁹

PD made a gradual conversion during the Cold War era foreign policy. Diversifying relations between non-state entities, a new format of relations between governments and foreign publics and an information technology revolution supported the broader application of PD. Policymakers in the United States recognized that influencing foreign public perceptions, beyond traditional state structures, should be a key foreign policy strategy.¹⁰ Jan Melissen argues that

Diplomacy is evolving much faster than in the second half of the twentieth century. It is no longer a stiff waltz among states alone, but a jazzy dance of colorful coalitions, and public diplomacy is at the heart of its current rebooting.¹¹

Many academics and experts of the modern day believe that practicing conventional diplomacy does not sufficiently address the socioeconomic, political, and even cultural complexities of today’s world. Lewis Manilow, who serves as the Chairman of the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, identified how people in modern contemporary societies influence the decision-making processes of the state. Modern diplomacy

⁶ Ibid., 113–115.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Geoffrey Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (New York: McMillan, 2005): 3.

⁹ Sasson Sofer, “Old and New Diplomacy: A Debate Revisited” *Review of International Studies*, 14:3 (July 1998): 195.

¹⁰ Elena Gurgu, Aristide Dumitru, “The Role of (PD)in International Relations in full Process of Globalization” *Annals of Spiru Haret University*, 2 (2016): 128.

¹¹ Jan Melissen, “Beyond the New Public Diplomacy” *Clingendael Paper*, 3 (2011): 1–2.

and even diplomats keep themselves up-to-date with the global news and are very vocal on media as well as digital media platforms.¹² Modern states certainly acknowledge the need to transcend beyond conventional understanding of interstate diplomacy, in order to construct long-lasting and durable relations with other states, the foreign public and even with non-state actors.¹³ Hence, PD is considered to be an evolution of modern diplomatic practices, in order to bridge the needs of contemporary diplomacy.

Scholars and practitioners of diplomacy thus define PD, considering the nature, scope, methods, and targeted actors of the emerging discipline. For instance, Eytan Gilboa suggests that ‘public diplomacy, as a way to interact with the foreign public, undertakes efforts to inform, influence, and engage the public to support national objectives and foreign policies.’¹⁴ Most importantly, what separates PD from traditional diplomacy is that PD includes state, non-state actors, and individuals, which could directly or indirectly influence favorable policy outcomes.¹⁵ Bruce Gregory is of the same view as Gilboa and considers PD to be an

instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes and behavior; build and manage relationship; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values.¹⁶

Since the introduction of the term public diplomacy by Edmund Gullion in 1965, a growing body of literature has explained various contours of diplomatic practices making PD more comprehensible.

As Gullion argues,

¹² Lewis Manilow, “From Bullets to Ballots: U.S. (PD)after the Cold War” *Public Talk at the CSIS*, June 7–8, 1994.

¹³ “Defining Public Diplomacy” *USC Center*, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org>, accessed on February 2, 2020.

¹⁴ Eytan Gilboa, “Public Diplomacy” in Gianpietro Mazzoleni, et al., ed., *International Encyclopedia of Political Communication* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015): 1297.

¹⁵ Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs, “Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual Divergence” *Public Relations Review*, 18:2 (1992): 138.

¹⁶ Bruce Gregory, “American Public Diplomacy: Enduring Characteristics, Elusive Transformation” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 6 (March 2011): 353.

Public diplomacy...deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.¹⁷

Gullion's definition explains PD as a country's attempt to manage communication and influence foreign audiences through different channels. This way, PD would create a favorable image of the respective country or its policies. Hans Tuch endorses Gullion's growing role of communication in PD and defines 'Public Diplomacy as a communication process of the government of a country with foreign audiences, trying to explain his ideas and ideals of respective nation, its institutions, and its culture as well as national interests and policies.'¹⁸

In the present environment, states are consistently modernizing and upgrading PD to suit contemporary demands. As explained by Nicholas Cull, new public diplomacy includes listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange programs, international broadcasting and psychological warfare.¹⁹ The discussion above thus reveals different contours of public diplomacy. Nevertheless, PD can only achieve its objectives if the government and the people provide essential soft power resources. In the words of Joseph Nye, 'Smart public diplomacy requires an understanding of the roles of credibility, self-criticism and civil society in generating soft power.'²⁰ A vibrant civil society, free press, and transparent and competitive political process are prerequisites of soft power. As a result, when states lack intrinsic 'Soft Power' resources, PD experiences a decline in both its credibility and influence.

¹⁷ Nicholas J. Cull, "(PD)before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase" in N. Snow and P.M. Taylor, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 19–23.

¹⁸ Hans Tuch, *Communicating with the World*, 7.

¹⁹ Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past" *USC Center on Public Diplomacy* (2009): 10.

²⁰ Joseph Nye Jr., "Soft Power and (PD)revisited" *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 14:1–2 (April 2019): 7.

SOFT POWER AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Robert Dhal's definition of power to 'get something done from other without the other's will' explains the ability to influence others to get the desired outcomes. Successful countries understand that influence in the international system goes beyond military strength and coercion. They recognize the importance of other elements, such as diplomacy, economic influence, cultural appeal, and soft power, in achieving their policy goals. The ability to frame the agenda and induce others to get the desired outcome is a far superior source of influence. According to Nye, 'Soft Power' is a way to achieve expected results through appeal and impact rather than coercion.²¹ Soft power provides the theoretical basis for applying and providing sources on which PD thrives.²² Soft power represents the intangible and normative sources of power, such as the attraction of cultural traditions, and political institutions that set the moral grounds for a country's influence.²³ Nye holds that soft power includes culture, political values, and foreign policies and that the state's foreign policy should be aimed at obtaining international legitimacy and cultivating a favorable projection of a nation worldwide.²⁴ While explaining the sources of US soft power, Nye speaks about how culture, political institutions, educational institutions, and favorable immigration policies can have far-reaching impacts on the foreign public.²⁵ Since the term's inception, soft power has been a widely used instrument of statecraft in diplomatic practices. Countries such as the US, China, Britain, France, Japan, United Arab Emirates UAE, and many other countries have institutionalized soft power as their foreign policy strategy.

In the modern era, powerful countries can frame issues, have political credibility, and produce global appeal for their culture, institutions, and

²¹ Joseph Nye, Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power Source" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (March 2008): 96; and Geoffrey Cowan and Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy in a Changing World" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 16 (March 2008): 6.

²² Gibola, "Public Diplomacy" 3.

²³ Ibid., 95.

²⁴ Joseph Nye Jr., "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics" 6–7.

²⁵ Joseph Nye Jr., "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy" *Political Science Quarterly*, 110:2 (2004): 119.

values.²⁶ Therefore, if any country can demonstrate morality or legitimacy in actions acceptable to the worldwide audience, it positively impacts the soft power of that country. The concept of soft power dramatically influences the development and conceptualization of public diplomacy. For Jozef Batora, PD is instrumental in promoting and expanding a country's soft power resource.²⁷ In the book *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Towards an American Information Strategy*, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt have introduced the term 'noopolitik' influenced by the concept of soft power. 'Noopolitik' is an aberration from the 'realpolitik.' Arquilla and Ronfeldt explained the role of soft power instead of hard power in the nation's strategic thinking. Countries could focus on ideas, values, and norms to substitute coercion to pursue foreign policy objectives.²⁸ The combination of soft power and 'Noopolitik' creates dialogic diplomacy to facilitate communication, which moves beyond the realm of the state as the only actor. Multilateral institutions, NGOs, media networks, and individuals are integral to dialogical diplomacy.²⁹ The involvement of non-state actors has brought fresh perspectives to the theory and application of PD.

Seminal work on PD concerns the national image and selling policies and values to the foreign public.³⁰ PD relies on dialogue-based engagement,³¹ which requires constant communication, interaction, and negotiation between governments, NGOs, and the public.³² Unlike traditional diplomacy, PD recognizes that communication is a two-way traffic

²⁶ Joseph Nye Jr., "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics" 8.

²⁷ Jozef Batora, "Public Diplomacy in Small and Medium-sized States: Norway and Canada" Discussion Paper, Netherland Institute of International Relations (2005): 2.

²⁸ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Toward an American Information Strategy* (Los Angeles: Rand, 1999): 17.

²⁹ Eytan Giloba, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects" *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12:2 (October 2007): 12.

³⁰ Shaun Riordan, "Dialogue Based Public Diplomacy: A New Foreign Policy Paradigm" *Discussion Paper in Diplomacy*, 95 (November 2004): 9.

³¹ Maureen Taylor and Michael Kent, "Dialogic Engagement: Clarifying Foundational Concepts" *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26 (2014): 385.

³² Alina Dolea, "Public Diplomacy Co-constructed Discourses of Engagement" in Kim A. Johnston and Maureen Taylor, ed., *The Handbook of Communication Engagement* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018): 331.

that involves talking and listening. The transmitter must maintain effective communication and know how the recipient conceives a transmitted message. If soft power desires a favorable outcome, the transmitter must know how his message is being taken.³³ Equally important is that the message of the transmitting government must be reliable and credible. PD theory and practice have seen a dramatic change recently, and governments have adapted accordingly. Previously, government communications with the external public were considered propaganda, which needed more credibility and thus created little influence. Public diplomacy, nevertheless, goes beyond traditional propaganda, recognizing that it is counterproductive in building trust and long-term relationships.³⁴

Nye makes a valid argument that

“[...] if the content of a country’s culture, values, and policies are not attractive, Public Diplomacy that ‘broadcasts’ them cannot produce soft power. It may produce just the opposite.”³⁵ The message’s credibility and authenticity are imperative to achieve the desired outcome.

Mark Leonard suggests that ‘Public Diplomacy is about building relationships; understanding the needs of other countries, cultures and peoples; communicating our points of view; correcting misperceptions; looking for areas where we can find common cause.’³⁶ PDs core aspects are daily communication, strategic communication, and relational diplomacy.³⁷ Each of the three components plays an equally crucial role in reinforcing the formation of a positive projection of states.

Given the scope of this book and the ongoing discussion surrounding soft power and public diplomacy, this study aims to introduce fresh perspectives on these concepts, thereby enriching the current discourse on both concepts. Considering the existing body of scholarship on soft power, this research provides a working definition of Soft Power, focusing on China’s perspective and its implementation of soft power in the international system.

³³ Joseph Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power” 100.

³⁴ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power” 101.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁶ Mark Leonard, “Public Diplomacy.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Soft power comes from sources of power carrying normative values. Along with culture, values and political institutions, the contribution towards the global public good, development and technological innovation shape a nation's soft power.

The traditional definition of Soft power by Joseph Nye has encouraged scholars of international relations to take an alternative view of power resources at a nation's disposal that can help to take a more persuasive way to achieve the foreign policy agenda without considering hard power or coercion. Soft power resources like a country's political system, values, and culture are primary in establishing soft power. However, with global interconnectedness and new information resources, the global public continues to get informed about other nations' contributions to the global society, shaping international public opinion. For instance, during the Covid 19 pandemic, countries were not only under scrutiny for their response toward the Covid 19 domestically but also for contributing as responsible global players by providing medical supplies and vaccines globally. Similarly, the countries that contribute to international development aid or response to natural calamities have a positive image in global public opinion. Lastly, the contribution toward innovation through participation in scientific discoveries and research that help people to improve their lives has a positive perception among the worldwide audience.

Similarly, reflecting upon the extensive literature on public diplomacy, this research also gives a working definition of PD

Public Diplomacy is a means to engage foreign governments and publics to pursue foreign policy goals through developing different channels of connectedness; which includes strategic communication through news and digital media and developing linkages with people by cultivating cultural, political and educational relations.

These two definitions offer valuable perspectives into the multifaceted nature of soft power and PD. They elucidate the distinction between the two concepts, highlighting that soft power is primarily rooted in a nation's culture, values, and political institutions, which largely influence its domestic affairs. However, a nation's capacity to contribute to global development and the public good has a profound impact on shaping the perception and image of that country on an international scale,

thus turning it into a valuable soft power resource. This is where PD comes into play, serving as the means through which a country effectively communicates and translates these soft power resources into tangible gains on the global stage.

The definitions underscore the significance of harnessing and strategically employing soft power and public diplomacy. By understanding the unique strengths of soft power and how it complements public diplomacy, nations can enhance their influence, build positive perceptions worldwide, and actively contribute to the common global good. This symbiotic relationship between soft power and PD is essential for countries seeking to navigate and succeed in the ever-changing dynamics of international relations and diplomacy.

For instance, the United States' humanitarian response to the October 2005 earthquake and US AID projects created enormous dividends for the US soft power in Pakistan, at least temporarily. The United States advertised these soft power initiatives through unceasing messaging campaigns via mainstream and digital media through taglines, songs, and advertisements by framing the image of a reliable partner. Similarly, the BRI and developmental projects in the global south have a meaningful impact on translating Chinese investment into soft power gains.

CHINESE VIEW OF SOFT POWER

Among the contemporary soft power practitioners, Chinese external policies are incrementally soft power influence in diplomatic practices. In China, the state and society believe that soft power is indispensable for Chinese external relations.³⁸ Soft power began to emerge in the Chinese academic lexicon in 1990 when Chinese Professor Wang Huning termed culture a great source of Chinese Soft power.³⁹ As pointed out by Jiang Zemin, the Chinese embrace of a culture-based Soft Power strategy is instrumental in pursuing a global power status.⁴⁰ The academic discourse

³⁸ "The Charm of China's soft power" *People's Daily*, March 10, 2006.

³⁹ Wang Huning, "Culture as National Power: Soft Power" 3.

⁴⁰ Jiang Zemin's Report to the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on November 8, 2002, entitled "Build a Well-off Society in an All-Round Way and Create a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" <http://en.people.cn>, accessed on February 26, 2019.

on soft power was soon capitulated by Chinese political leadership. President Hu Jintao, in 2005, pronounced that both hard and soft power are significant for China to project its soft power through cultural outreach as a priority.⁴¹ On the occasion of the 17th National Congress of the CPC, its Congress Report emphasized ‘to enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people’s basic cultural rights and interests.’⁴² To incorporate ‘Soft Power’ in the constitution of, the government’s highest authoritative body authorized was unprecedented.⁴³ A decade later, the Chinese official commitment to soft power-based foreign policy was reiterated by Xi Jinping at the 19th National People’s Congress in October 2017 by incorporating soft power in the constitution of the CPC.⁴⁴ China officially stands to the commitment to ‘Peaceful Development,’ projecting an image of developing China as a responsible and peaceful power.⁴⁵

China hence constitutes, ‘Soft Power’ as a fundamental pillar in its approach to engaging with the international community. The concept of ‘Peaceful Development’ is embodied in China’s ‘Soft Power’ toward becoming a more collaborative and constructive global participant.

China’s interpretation of ‘Soft Power’ diverges significantly from its Western connotations. China has embraced a comprehensive understanding of soft power, which harmoniously amalgamates traditional Chinese principles and socialist values rooted in Marxism. This unique blend is characterized by the infusion of Socialist Core values and the Confucian philosophy, enabling China to project influence and appeal on the global stage in a distinct and culturally resonant manner.⁴⁶ By

⁴¹ Hu Jintao speech to the Summit on the United Nations 60th anniversary on September 16, 2005, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn>, accessed on February 24, 2019.

⁴² Hu Jintao speech to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 15, 2007, <http://en.people.cn>, accessed on February 26, 2019.

⁴³ Yiwei Wang, “Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft power” 258.

⁴⁴ Xi Jinping address to the 19th National congress of the Communist Party of China on November 3, 2017, http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_19da, accessed on July 7, 2019.

⁴⁵ Dai Bingguo, “Persisting with Taking the Path of Peaceful Development” *Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, December 6, 2010.

⁴⁶ Osamu Sayama, “China’s Approach to Soft Power Seeking a Balance between Nationalism, Legitimacy and International Influence” *RUSI Occasional Paper* (March 2016): 5; also see Chin-Hao Huang, “China’s Soft Power in East Asia: A Quest for Status and Influence?” *NBR Special Report* 42, National Bureau of Asian Research (January 2013).

augmenting these foundational elements, China has crafted a narrative that boosts its international engagement and cooperation. On the occasion of the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, the outgoing President Hu Jintao expressed his version of the Soft power in China's internal and external relations inspired by 'socialism with Chinese Characteristics;

socialist core values include prosperity [fuqiang], democracy [minzhu], civilization [wenming], harmony [hexie] as important for nation-building; freedom [ziyou], equality [pingdeng], justice [gongzheng], rule of law [fazhi] as important for the construction of an ideal society; and patriotism [aiguo], respect for work [jingye], faith [chengxin], friendship [youshan] as moral standards for nationals.⁴⁷

In the West, the discourse of 'Soft power,' political institutions, systems, and culture are among the primary sources. Whereas, in China, the absence of competitive electoral and the Communism-inspired political model with one-party system cannot be termed as a soft power source. The fundamental difference lies in meritocracy versus democracy at the state level and collectivism of socialist ideas vs. individualism as the core of sociopolitical discourses.⁴⁸ The limitation of the Chinese socialist system to create soft power and at the global stage is one among many impediments to Chinese 'Soft Power' from a Western viewpoint. To overcome this impediment, President Xi envisaged socialist modernization to develop a modern socialist country committed to more integration into the liberal market and adherence to rule-based global governance.⁴⁹ China's political leadership wants to present a Socialist version of a 'Consultative Democracy' to project Chinese culture, which could serve as the 'foundation for soft cultural power, socialist culture and Chinese identity.'⁵⁰ Culture would continue to serve as the leading influence in

⁴⁷ Hu Jintao's address to the 18th CPC National Congress on November 27, 2012, <http://www.china-embassy.org>, accessed on March 1, 2019.

⁴⁸ Deniel Bell, "China's Political Meritocracy versus Western Democracy" *The Economist*, June 12, 2018.

⁴⁹ Michael A. Peters, "The Chinese Dream: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49:14 (November 2017): 1300.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

China's 'Soft Power' in the quest to present a more appealing version of the socialist state.⁵¹ China can enhance its soft power capabilities and foster greater understanding and cooperation with other nations by resolving contentious issues.

SOURCES OF CHINESE SOFT POWER

As previously stated, the Western view of 'Soft Power' originates from intangible sources of influence, such as the country's culture, values, and institutions.⁵² However, China has re-conceptualized soft power to meet domestic and foreign relations requirements.⁵³ Political leadership in China recognized that its political institutions may not be a source of soft power to influence the global public. Wang Huning claims that the diversity in Chinese culture represents a platform to introduce policies and positively influence the foreign public.⁵⁴ This perspective was endorsed in the political report to the 16th CPC in 2002, enunciating the cultural impact on economics and politics is imperative for augmenting the national power of the communist states.⁵⁵ Soft power since then permeates cultural projection, 'socialist core values' development of a 'harmonious society' negating China as a Threat to the West and the prevailing international order.⁵⁶ The culture-based soft power now features alongside a state's military and economic components power.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Osamu Sayama "China's Approach to Soft Power Seeking a Balance between Nationalism, Legitimacy and International Influence" 6.

⁵² Joseph Nye, "Soft Power" *Foreign Policy*, 80 (1990): 156.

⁵³ Ibid., 1230.

⁵⁴ Wang Huning, "Culture as National Power: Soft Power" *Journal of Fudan University*, 3 (1993): 23–28.

⁵⁵ Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, November 8, 2002, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn>, accessed on March 8, 2019.

⁵⁶ Carola McGiffert, "Chinese Soft Power and its Implications for the United States" *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (March 2009).

⁵⁷ "Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008" Office of the Secretary of Defence, 2008, <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/china/dod-2008.pdf>, accessed on June 8, 2019.

‘Soft power with Chinese characteristics’ (中國特色軟實力) is based on internal cohesion and external influence, an organic cohesion of the two.⁵⁸ Soft power is an important source of social influence and state power in contemporary China. For the communist party, the culture and soft power has great indigenous appeal, which is imperative to enhance China’s global influence.⁵⁹ Such thinking emanates from China’s cultural underpinning, influenced by Confucianism’s imperative of moral values and kind ways of persuasion rather than the application of force.⁶⁰ Further, culture takes precedents of Daoism/Taoism, Buddhism, and classical Chinese literature, emphasizing benevolence and empathy.⁶¹ Daoist traditions (focuses on harmony and universalism), underscores the importance of pursuing ‘softness over hardness’ in social relations.⁶² Rich cultural influence on China’s glorious past is reflected in the nation’s present quest for national strength. Explaining the importance of culture in China’s national power, Jian Zemin stated that

The power of culture is deeply rooted in a nation’s vitality, creativity and cohesion. All Party members must fully understand the strategic significance of culture [and] cultural restructuring of the Chinese civilization, which is extensive and profound.⁶³

He further stated that

To build a well-off society in an all-round way calls for major efforts to develop socialist culture and spiritual civilization. In the present-day world,

⁵⁸ Claude Zanardi, “China’s Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Cases of Confucius Institutes and Chinese Naval Diplomacy” *Journal of Political Power*, 9:3 (2016): 431.

⁵⁹ Kingsley Edney, *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda*, 108.

⁶⁰ Shaohua Hu, “Confucianism and Contemporary Chinese Politics” *Politics and Policy*, 35:1 (February: 2007): 5.

⁶¹ Mingjiang Li, “Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospect” in Mingjiang Li, ed., *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009): 22.

⁶² Zhen Don Weng and Feng-Yan Wang, “The Taiji Model of Self II: Developing Self Model and Self Cultivation Theories Based on Chinese Cultural Traditions of Taoism and Buddhism,” *Frontiers*, 11 (October 2020): 2.

⁶³ Jiang Zemin, “Full Report of Jiang Zeming Report at 16th Party Congress” on November 15, 2002, <http://www.china.org.cn>, accessed on March 1, 2019.

culture is interactive with economic and political activities, and its status and functions are becoming more and more outstanding in the competition for overall national strength. The power of culture is deeply rooted in a nation's vitality, creativity and cohesion. All Party members must fully understand the strategic significance of cultural development and make socialist culture develop and flourish.⁶⁴

Five years later, Zemin's successor, President Hu Jintao officially incorporated culture and soft power as an inseparable source of Chinese internal stability and global influence. On the occasion of the 17th National Congress of the CPC in 2007, Hu Jintao maintained that soft power is imperative for Chinese national cohesion.⁶⁵ In his words

'Enhance culture as part of our country's soft power to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests.' Since then, the nation has started to include soft power development as part of the national development strategy.⁶⁶

The subsequent political leadership of China has strengthened Hu Jintao's ideas. Reception of the concept of Soft power from the highest policy-making institutions and leadership reflects the importance China gives to its soft power strategy. With non-tangible sources of power, China's leadership prioritizes tangible sources of power.⁶⁷ China's soft power strategy is a mix of national power resources that China has accrued since the Cold War ended. According to Xin Li and Verner Worm, the five pillars of Chinese soft power are cultural temptation, development model, international institutions, external projection, and economic appeal.⁶⁸ As discussed earlier, culture remains a paramount source of Chinese soft power. However, cultural primacy does not subside the other sources of

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Hu Jintao's address to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 21, 2007, <http://en.people.cn>, accessed on March 1, 2019.

⁶⁶ Claude Zhanardi "China's Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Cases of Confucius Institutes and Chinese Naval Diplomacy" 432.

⁶⁷ Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power and its Policy Implications: A Comparative Study of China and Taiwan" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 17:56 (June 2008): 435.

⁶⁸ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise" *Journal of Chinese Political Science/Association of Chinese Political Studies*, 16 (2010): 69.

Chinese soft power. Chinese rapid development and economic muscle have added significant value to China's soft power. China's economic miracle was a transition from a Soviet-styled command model to a market economy. The economic progress has brought enormous affluence and developed China's global image as an economic powerhouse. China is second to the US in terms of Gross Domestic Product GDP and first in terms of the Purchasing Power Parity PPP. Owing to a consistent growth rate, poverty reduction, innovation in science and technology, diverse production capacity, and massive infrastructure development, China is now the world's leading economy.

Chinese economic progress and reform have attracted global admiration from politicians, academia, and international development agencies. The UN Chief Antonio Guterres commended China for innovation in Green Technologies and for promoting development in developing countries.⁶⁹ The former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called China a role model for economic growth.⁷⁰ The World Bank, in its report, also hailed China's contribution toward world economic growth and development. Ayhan Kose, Director of the World Bank Development Prospect Group, said, 'Rapid growth was made possible by a wide range of reforms, which transformed a state-dominated, planned, rural, and closed economy to a more market-based, urbanized, and open economy.'⁷¹ China's economic value and market reforms provide substantial business opportunities and investment in China which has resulted in enormous wealth generation.

According to the World Investment Report, China has shown a consistent improvement in the Direct Investment FDI inflow with US\$133–136 billion dollars in 2016, making it a great attraction for global multinationals.⁷² In 2022, the inbound FDI to China was US\$189.1

⁶⁹ "‘The Green Economy is the Future,’ UN chief says in Beijing, urging climate solutions that strengthen economies, protect the environment" April 2, 2019, UN News, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1037461>, accessed on January 9, 2020.

⁷⁰ Speech by the Indian Prime Minister Mahnomen Singh at the Chinese academy of Social Sciences on January 1, 2008, <http://in.china-embassy.org>, accessed on February 28, 2019.

⁷¹ "Promoting a More Inclusive and Sustainable Development" February 22, 2018, www.worldbank.org, accessed on February 28, 2019.

⁷² "World Investment Report 2018: Investment and New Industrial Policies, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development" Geneva (2018): 4.

billion, a remarkable increase considering the Covid outbreak in the preceding years. Previously, in the 2008 global financial crisis, China's sustainable economic trajectory and support to world nations prevented a major global economic crisis. World leaders, including President Barack Obama, acknowledged Chinese economic contribution in this regard, who welcomed Chinese contribution to the world economy during the 2008 financial crisis.⁷³

China's economic success is attributed to the opening of the economy during the Deng era. Gradually China has established partnerships with the developing South to share its economic success. Joshua Cooper Ramo has described China's contribution toward the socioeconomic development of countries across Africa and Asia as the 'Beijing Consensus.'⁷⁴ The 'Beijing Consensus' is an alternative to the 'Washington Consensus,' which seeks innovation, economic growth, sustainable development alongside economic prosperity of the developing world. The appeal of the Chinese Model in the developing world from Asian regions to Latin America demonstrates Chinese economic success and the increasing clout of soft power.⁷⁵ Despite scholars' disagreement about the Chinese model's existence and success, China's economic progress greatly appeals to the developing world. Chinese Scholars such as Fang Changping believe that China's development model can be a good source of soft power and should be projected for global acceptance.⁷⁶ China's extensive and ambitious development initiatives in developing nations serve as evidence of the Chinese development model's expansion and the widespread acceptance of its developmental diplomacy in the global south.

According to a Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Environment Report, China provided 'US\$360 billion for energy generation and supply transport and storage in the Developing Countries

⁷³ "Remarks by President Barack Obama at Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders on November 16, 2009" <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov>, accessed on March 2, 2019.

⁷⁴ Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus*, 24.

⁷⁵ Carola McGiffert, "China's Soft Power and its Implications for the United States" Center for Strategic and International Studies International (March 2009): 22.

⁷⁶ Andrew C. Kuchins, et al., "China's Soft Power and its Implications for the United States" *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (March 11, 2009): 22.

from 2001 to 2014.⁷⁷ Another report by AIDDATA, China's global and development footprints, confirms the previous studies showcasing Chinese development aid from 2000 to 2014, covering 140 countries and has committed US\$350 billion for 4300 projects.⁷⁸ One Belt One Road OBOR initiative of 2013, later rebranded as BRI is another global development and investment initiative by China to increase its economic footprint by investing an estimated US\$1.2–1.3 trillion in around 60 countries by 2027. BRI is considered a brainchild of the President Xi to revive the ancient Silk Route which connected China with Asia, Africa and Europe for trade of silk and spices.⁷⁹ As a part of the BRI's flagship initiative in May 2013, China launched the US\$65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a mega infrastructure development project in Pakistan to help improve Pakistan's infrastructure and enable China to connect with the North and the African Continent through land routes. Other BRI initiatives include gas pipelines, and road and railway connectivity in Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, South East Asia, and African Continent to name a few. Such enormous development efforts help China to showcase the image that China is concerned about the developing world and assert its commitment to the areas of development that matter to the recipient countries.⁸⁰ China's global outreach through its developmental aid projects is a massive source of soft power.

In contrast to its economic achievements, China's political system has consistently been under scrutiny from the democratic West. The criticism stems from apparent insensitivity towards human rights, strict media censorship and ban on political activism. The single-party-dominated polity controlled by the CPC has faced challenges and criticism for political authoritarianism. Despite these concerns, it is essential to acknowledge that China has made notable strides towards progress, since the

⁷⁷ Isabella Neuweg, "What Types of Energy does China Finance with its Development Aid?," June 21, 2018, <http://www.lse.ac.uk>.

⁷⁸ "China's Global Development Footprint" report by AIDDATA, www.aiddata.org/china-official-finance, accessed on February 28, 2019.

⁷⁹ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative", Council on Foreign Relations, January 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/chinas-massive-belt-and-roadinitiative#:~:text=Launched%20in%202013%20by%20President,China's%20economic%20and%20political%20influence>, accessed on September 15, 2020.

⁸⁰ David H. Shinn, "The China Factor in African Ethics and Human Rights" Conference Paper for the Oxford-Uchiro- Carnegie Council Conference, December 2006.

transformative Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, China has been gradually working towards the establishment of a duality of economy and politics, signifying a path towards progress while keeping a CPC primacy in the political arena. While acknowledging the shortcomings and challenges, recognizing the ongoing efforts toward China's pursuit of progress is incontestable. For the past twenty-five years, China has developed a socialist one-party system which it considers instrumental for its economic advancement. Some argue that countries like Singapore and China's path toward progress actually sprung from pragmatic authoritarianism. Tuo Zhen, the Deputy Propaganda Chief, pressed for a one-party system as a prerequisite for any political reform;

The purpose of China's political system reform is to uphold the leadership of the party tightly... and to develop the people's democracy that is more universal, sufficient and well-rounded. Political structural reform cannot be achieved overnight, and China will not blindly copy the models of other countries.⁸¹

Arguably, the implementation of these political reforms may not result in a complete adoption of Western democratic principles, multi-party elections, or a representative model of governance within China. However, it is essential to recognize that introducing property rights and economic openness could be a crucial stepping stone toward developing political reforms tailored to Chinese characteristics. By embracing economic reforms, China has witnessed a spillover effect that has significantly altered the state's role in economic micromanagement. Instead of being an authoritative hegemon, the state has assumed the role of a mediator, fostering dialogue and cooperation between various economic groups and stakeholders. This transformation has allowed the state to become a wealth creator, generating opportunities for domestic businesses and foreign investors.

Alongside other reforms, local governments, a greater independent judiciary, and the proliferation of NGOs are positive developments toward

⁸¹ Viola Zhou, "Economic and Political Reforms Take Center Stage at China's Party Congress Curtain-raiser" *South China Morning Post*, October 17, 2017.

political reforms.⁸² China's leadership seeks legitimacy by providing its people with public goods and economic prosperity. By bringing 700 million people out of poverty, the political leadership of CPC has gained the people's confidence, which in turn provides international social capital and recognition.

Likewise, on the international front, China claims the pursuit of peaceful coexistence coupled with a 'Harmonious World' (和谐世界) order.⁸³ China's quest for a 'Harmonious World' in the modern era emanated from Deng Xiaoping's ideas and its contemporary manifestation was presented at the 17th People's Congress in October 2007. However, from Deng's dictum of 'hiding one capacity and biding one's time,' China has responded to the changing externalities and complexities by moving towards a path of a more accomplished power.⁸⁴ Showing value to the existing rule of global governance, China underscores the role of the United Nations (UN) and its organs in the issues pertaining to global peace and proposes diplomatic measures to resolve geopolitical disputes.⁸⁵ On the occasion of the 60th Anniversary Summit of the UN, Hu Jintao outlined four points of the Chinese vision of the world (1) collective security and multilateralism, (2) development through cooperation, (3) a harmonious world through inclusiveness and coexistence among civilizations (4) and comprehensive UN reform process to increase efficiency and effectiveness to address the global problems.⁸⁶ China's view of the international system is based on acknowledging the globalized interconnectedness, the role of multilateralism, and a more inclusive UN while advocating diplomatic solutions to geopolitical disputes.

China's growing political muscles are evident from playing a breakthrough role during Iran's nuclear deal, to the North Korean-US standoff, in the Burma crisis and the Afghan reconciliation process after

⁸² Gary H. Jefferson, Jun Zhang, "The Future Trajectory of China's Political Reform: A Property Rights Interpretation" in Jun Zhang, ed., *Unfinished Reforms in the Chinese Economy* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2013): 480.

⁸³ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise" 79.

⁸⁴ Yongnian Zheng, "Harmonious Society' and 'Harmonious World': China's Policy Discourse Under Hu Jintao" China Policy Institute, Briefing Series – Issue 26, (October 2007).

⁸⁵ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise" 79.

⁸⁶ Hu Jintao's Speech on the UN 60th Anniversary Summit on September 16, 2005, <http://www.china-un.org>, accessed on March 3, 2019.

the US withdrawal in 2020–21. Alongside, China’s global political influence has been on the rise. China began to gain recognition for its political influence as it successfully hosted three multilateral summits in the year 2006 including; the Shanghai Summit of Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO) in June, the Nanning ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit in October, and the November Beijing Summit of the Forum on the China-Africa Cooperation.⁸⁷ Hosting these high-level summits showed China’s intent to make a mark as an important stakeholder in global political affairs. Hosting the mega-events became a Chinese forte since hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai Expo in 2010.

Similarly, China’s inclusion in the global financial institutions and trade bodies such as the International Monetary Fund IMF, the World Bank WB, and the World Trade Organizations WTO augmented China’s credentials as a serious stakeholder in global economic governance. It suggests an emerging posture of China’s international relations beyond a regional actor.⁸⁸ These trends indicate that China’s presence at the forefront of critical global issues and worldwide diplomatic presence has enabled it to exercise its soft power.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OF CHINA

For China, ‘Public diplomacy’ is a new lexicon in its foreign policy vocabulary. Historically, the Chinese have used external propaganda to project their positive image and achievements to foreign audience. Unlike its Western connotation, propaganda⁸⁹ enunciates positive meaning and

⁸⁷ Chen Zhimin, “International Responsibility and China’s Foreign Policy” in Masafumi Iida, ed., *China’s Shift: Global Strategy for the Rising Power* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies: 2009): 14.

⁸⁸ Baohui Zhang, “Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition: Trends and Implications” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 2 (2010): 40.

⁸⁹ Many scholars believe that Public Diplomacy is a euphemism for Propaganda. Public Diplomacy practices by one state could be considered as hostile propaganda by the other. In ‘China, Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Propaganda Department’ was entrusted with political communication. As China open to the outside world in 1990s due to the negative connotation attached with propaganda the department was renamed as The Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, or CCPPD. See Kingsley Edney, *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda: International Power and Domestic Political Cohesion* (New york: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 23. Also see David Shambaugh “China’s Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy” *The China Journal*, 57 (January 2007).

undertakes activities related to advertisement, branding favorable image, and projecting and sharing news.⁹⁰ The two facets of propaganda include internal propaganda and external propaganda. Internal propaganda is aimed at influencing the domestic audience regarding the political discourse and policies of the CPC.⁹¹ On the other hand, external propaganda is an instrument to harness a favorable image among the external audience. While internally, the propaganda aims to control public opinion through state institutions, led by the CPC Propaganda Department, China's external propaganda lacks appeal on the international stage. One factor contributing to this is the Chinese government's approach to blending external and internal propaganda.⁹² Unlike the Western perception of propaganda, which often involves spreading false information, the term carries a positive meaning in China, emphasizing the projection of a favorable image. Consequently, China has prioritized the study of PD as a means to enhance its positive image on the international stage.⁹³ Whether this transition from propaganda to public diplomacy in external communication and relationship management has been successful, needs careful assessment. However, PD and external propaganda use similar tools such as international broadcasting, television, and radio for the same intent of managing perceptions. Nevertheless, in the modern political vocabulary, PD has gained greater epistemological credibility and international recognition, aligning well with China's efforts in a Western-dominated context.

Historically, Chinese understanding of PD has been influenced by its cultural outreach and the importance of people-to-people diplomacy with less emphasis on the media and broadcasting-based public diplomacy. This style was too similar to the French cultural diplomacy than the American media outreach-based foreign policy.⁹⁴ It was not until now that the Chinese media appeared to make a significant global presence and assumed an equally important component of PD. Primarily influenced by the US Public Diplomacy approach, in March 2004, China, inaugurated

⁹⁰ Yiwei Wang, "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power" 259.

⁹¹ Kingsley Edney, *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda. Asia Today: International Power and Domestic Cohesion Today* (New York: Macmillan, 2014): 43.

⁹² Ibid., 4.

⁹³ Ibid., 258.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the Division of Public Diplomacy run by the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁹⁵ This evolution indicates a transformation in the essence and future trajectory of Chinese PD. As a consequence, a significant rise can be observed in the involvement of non-state actors, including academia, businessmen, and NGOs, assuming prominent roles in shaping PD initiatives. Hence, China has made a partial transition from a state-centric approach to a relatively diverse approach in its PD.

Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne argue that the past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented growth of non-state actors. Their global outreach and influence have transcended the traditional limitations of states. States have recognized the importance and power of non-state actors and their role in public diplomacy.⁹⁶ The change in the approach of the Chinese government toward PD reflects the recognition of other actors in the foreign policy domain.⁹⁷ Moreover, China's economic growth paved the way for huge investments by the state in public diplomatic activities such as cultural exchanges, media-based communication, and nation branding campaigns. These diplomatic campaigns have raised eyebrows in countries wary of China's growing global influence. For China, however, its PD outreach demonstrates the advantages of substantial investment in PD campaigns.

CHINESE VIEW ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

A vast array of available literature on PD provides multiple frameworks and theories illustrating the range of contemporary PD approaches. A singular framework to demonstrate Chinese PD is complicated in this context. Chinese PD has evolved and incorporated new components of modern diplomacy. As for China, its foreign policy is a veritable organ of domestic policy and PD serves the corresponding national objectives in domestic and international politics.⁹⁸ Therefore, PD performs the following functions; (1) informing the foreign public of China's political and economic reforms and their positive impacts on the State and

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (London: Rutledge, 2011): 258.

⁹⁷ Ingrid d' Hooghe, "The Rise of China's Public Diplomacy" Netherlands Institute of International Relations, *Clingendael Diplomacy*, 12 (2007): 11.

⁹⁸ Eytan Gilboa, "Public Diplomacy" 4.

society, (2) to be considered a responsible and trustworthy player in regional and global affairs (3) playing a constructive role in toward global peace (4) project zeal of Chinese civilization and cultural profoundness to the foreign publics.⁹⁹ Promoting these goals by engaging foreign and domestic publics requires a comprehensive PD approach incorporating all public outreach tools to get China's global voice and serve Chinese strategic objectives. Keeping this in view, China has adapted to the changing nature of PD through relational diplomacy and national branding.

According to Eytan Gilboa, the contemporary trends in PD are influenced by three important and interrelated revolutionary developments in mass communications, international relations, and politics.¹⁰⁰ The burgeoning influence of the internet and the rise of global news network has transformed mass communication. News and information from global news networks like CNN, BBC, CNBC, Aljazeera, CCTV, and many others broadcast every critical development to the world-wide audience. Likewise, the internet has enabled individuals, NGOs, and other private entities to articulate their ideas globally. Traditional sources of power in international relations have seen a gradual shift from military and economic influence on the power of persuasion and attraction. Revolutionary political changes are influenced by the global wave of democratization, with communities seeking more freedom and authoritarianism crumbling across the globe.¹⁰¹

According to Eytan Gilboa, The conceptual understanding of PD has been influenced and

shaped by the end of the Cold War; the information age; and the rise in extremism, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. Several fields in the social sciences, including international relations, communication studies, public relations, and marketing, have contributed more than other areas to theoretical and empirical knowledge of public diplomacy.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Ingrid d'Hooghe, "Public Diplomacy in the People's Republic of China" 94.

¹⁰⁰ Eytan Gilboa, "Mass Communication and Diplomacy: A Theoretical Framework" *Communication Theory*, 10:3 (2001): 16; Eytan Gilboa, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects" *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12:2 (2001): 20.

¹⁰¹ Eytan Gilboa, "Public Diplomacy in a Changing World" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (March 2008): 56.

¹⁰² Ibid., 56–57.

These changes signify a historical development in the nature and scope of PD that had been equated with soft power and mistakenly understood as public relations, psychological warfare and propaganda campaigns.

MODELS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Scholarship in PD continues to acknowledge these changes and provide a new conceptual understanding. Most scholarships on PD focused either on relational or communication-based frameworks. Concerning the developments in modern communication technology, some scholars introduced new vocabulary, ‘strategic communication’ or ‘strategic public diplomacy,’ in the studies of public diplomacy.¹⁰³ Jan Melissen coined the term ‘New Public Diplomacy’ to differentiate diplomacy from PD. Contemporary diplomacy is a two-way traffic with foreign policy objectives in sight while engaging foreign audiences through communication and dialogue. New Public Diplomacy thus focuses on non-state actors’ role in developing multilayer interconnectedness between global audiences through soft power.¹⁰⁴ Soft power plays an essential role in the new PD through cultural diplomacy and educational exchange programs.

Other PD scholars have also applied other communication models in the PD domain. For instance, Robert Entman’s ‘cascading activation model is the most promising approach to connect policy, media and public opinion.’¹⁰⁵ Entman argues that the powerful actors in states, like political leadership and their aides, frame and shape public opinion through media outreach. Some players in the state are more potent than others and influence domestic and foreign audiences more.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Mediated PD is a way towards agenda building and projecting a favorable image in foreign media. Powerful satellite broadcasts such as Al-Jazeera,

¹⁰³ Carnes Lord, *Losing Hearts and Minds? Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006): 73.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice” in Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2005): 14–15.

¹⁰⁵ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 17.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

BBC and CNN can influence global events and frame specific images to harness public support.¹⁰⁷

While all these theoretical tools make PD understandable, a standard theory or framework to address all facets of PD is rare.¹⁰⁸ Often the existing tools and evaluation methods used in PD have yet to be fruitful in gauging accurate results and often fail to produce productive knowledge.

INTEGRATED PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

This study employs an integrated approach to the conceptual framework of PD to gain insights into how Chinese PD is put into practice. While China does not explicitly adhere to a specific approach in conducting public diplomacy, the research identifies a tendency towards utilizing three key mediums: mediated public diplomacy, nation branding, and relational diplomacy. These choices align with China's political and foreign policy objectives.¹⁰⁹ China envisages a more significant role in international politics and recognizes that the integrated part of news media, relationship building, and national branding would give it greater leverage in creating a favorable image of the country abroad.

This study takes an integrated public diplomacy developed by Guy Golan and provides a deeper perspective on Chinese Public Diplomacy. This approach would help connect different avenues of Chinese diplomacy, namely (Relational Dimension) Cultural diplomacy, nation branding, and mediated diplomacy. These three areas of Chinese PD present short, medium, and long-term means, respectively, to achieve the goals of the soft power approach in its external affairs.¹¹⁰ 'Each component of Integrated PD undertakes an exclusive task. Nevertheless, integrating these three produces a desired outcome of long-term relation.'¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ D. A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects" *Journal of Communication*, 49:1 (1999): 115.

¹⁰⁸ Eytan Gilboa, "Public Diplomacy" 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ingrid d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 353.

¹¹⁰ Guy J. Golan and Sung-Un Yang Guy, "Introduction: The Integrated Public Diplomacy Perspective" J. Golan and Sung-Un Yang, ed., *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy Communication and Engagement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015): 4.

¹¹¹ Guy Golan, "An Integrated Approach to Public Diplomacy" *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57 (September 2013): 1252.

The first component of integrated public diplomacy is Mediated Public Diplomacy,¹¹² which looks into government efforts to build its positive image in global public opinion through news media and satellite broadcasting.¹¹³ According to Golan, it serves the purpose of government to citizen diplomacy with the help of a third party, which is global mass media.¹¹⁴ Thus a nation's perspective on international relations and its position on global conflicts are projected through mediated public diplomacy.¹¹⁵ Another added dimension to mediated public diplomacy is the introduction of Video News Release (VNR), a method through which governments directly broadcast their message, bypassing traditional new media.¹¹⁶ For China, where PD corresponds to the internal audience, VNRs are essential to internal public diplomacy. VNRs are especially helpful in agenda framing and shaping public opinion.¹¹⁷ Professor Patricia Curtin notes that media tends to enjoy public relations subsidies during an economic crisis or under unfavorable economic circumstances, therefore, those public relations campaigns that utilize mass media might turn out to be successful.¹¹⁸ In China, VNRs have been instrumental in depicting 'humanize' China and media campaign to broadcast videos of 'Experience China' have received positive feedback.¹¹⁹ Similarly, social media, particularly YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, are critical components of mediated PD to target key audiences. Mediated Public

¹¹² Robert. M. Entman, "Theorizing mediated public diplomacy: The US case" *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13:2 (2008): 88.

¹¹³ Tamir Sheafer and Itay Gabay, "Mediated public diplomacy: A strategic contest over international agenda building and Frame Building" *Political Communication*, 26:4 (2009): 26.

¹¹⁴ Golan, "Integrated Public Diplomacy" 1251.

¹¹⁵ Tamir. Sheafer and S. R. Shenhav, "Mediated Public Diplomacy in a new era of warfare" 273.

¹¹⁶ Colleen Connolly-Ahern and Lian Ma, "Taking It to the Streets: The Evolving Use of VNRs as a Public Diplomacy Tool in the Digital Age" in J. Golan and Sung-Un Yang, ed., *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy Communication and Engagement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015): 230.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Patricia A. Curtin, "Reevaluating Public Relations Information Subsidies: Market-driven Journalism and Agenda-building Theory and Practice" *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11 (January 1999): 54.

¹¹⁹ Colleen Connolly-Ahern & Lian Ma, "The Evolving Use of VNRs as a Public Diplomacy Tool" 237.

Diplomacy is, however, considered a short-term means to influence the attitudes of the foreign public. It operates in intense competition for media attention, response to immediate challenges, and disseminates information such as policies and responses. Consequently, it is impactful for a shorter period.

The second aspect of Integrated Public Diplomacy is Nation Branding. Developed by Simon Anholt in the 1990s, national branding is a phenomenon to build a country's image and credibility through advertisement.¹²⁰ Nation branding is a unique multifaceted phenomenon, that is a blend of various instruments, which can make the nation stand out in terms of its cultural differentiation and help impact the target audience more effectively.¹²¹ This intricate and multidimensional effort helps design a conscientiously crafted image of a nation, just like products and corporations. This helps with the medium-term to long-term influence of a nation on the target audience. It involves the values that reflect people's national character, governance, and institutions, attraction for tourism, culture and investment are part of a nation brand.¹²² Alongside value, a vital aspect of a national brand is identifying key stakeholders to target the critical audience. The stakeholders include but are not limited to government representatives, media, NGOs and other vital institutions from civil society or government. These key stakeholders will collaborate under a set guideline and joint strategy to achieve their targets.¹²³ At this time of acute competition among nations for local and foreign markets, nation branding is aimed at 'fulfill three major objectives: to attract tourists, to stimulate inward investment and to boost exports.'¹²⁴

The third facet of Integrated Public diplomacy is Relational Diplomacy. This relational viewpoint, talks about how governments, NGOs and even corporations center upon long-term relationship management, in order to secure and nurture 'mutually beneficial relationships with

¹²⁰ Simon Anholt, "Nation-brands of the Twenty-first Century" *Journal of Brand Management*, 5:6 (1998): 395.

¹²¹ Yvonne Johnston, "The Relevance, Scope and Evolution of Nation Branding" in Keith Dinnie, ed., *Nation Branding Concepts, Issues, Practice* (Elsevier Linacre House: Oxford, 2008): 15.

¹²² Ibid., 16.

¹²³ Inga Hlín Pálsdóttir, "The Case of 'Iceland Naturally'—Establishing an Umbrella Brand to Increase Country Image Impact and Coherence" in Keith Dinnie, ed., *Nation Branding Concepts, Issues, Practice* (Oxford: Elsevier Linacre House, 2008): 188.

¹²⁴ Yvonne Johnston, "The Relevance, Scope and Evolution of Nation Branding" 17.

foreign publics,' by leveraging soft power strategies like developmental aid, and certain exchange programs.¹²⁵ For China, relational diplomacy takes culture as the foundation of building relationships, including education exchanges, opening Confucius institutes across the globe, and cultural exchanges as a framework to develop long-term relations with the foreign public.¹²⁶ Recently development aid has taken the lead in China's relational framework, which will be discussed later in the study (Fig. 2.1).

These three components of PD serve the similar purpose of achieving a common goal to advance a nation's foreign policy. However, these components may vary in their nature, scope, and approach in relaying the message to the targeted audience. The following chart illustrates how the three components of integrated public diplomacy work toward a common purpose.

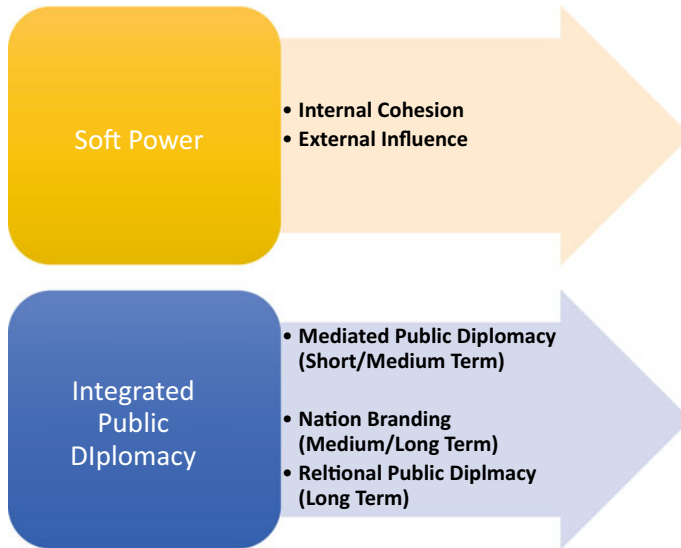


Fig. 2.1 Chinese soft power and public diplomacy framework (Source Guy Golan, "An Integrated Approach to Public Diplomacy" *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57, [September 2013])

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ R.S. Zaharna, "Mapping Out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives Information and Relational Communication Frameworks" in Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 86.

Table 2.1 Integrated public diplomacy

	<i>Targeted Audience</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Effects</i>
Mediated Public Diplo- macy	Mass Audience, Strategic Publics, Governments	International broadcasting, Digital media communica- tion	Short term	Communication	Public opinion, Communication, and Advocacy
Nation Branding	Mass Audience, Strategic Publics, Governments	Exports, Tourism. Foreign Direct, Investment, People, Governance	Medium Term	Reputation	Public opinion, Recognition
Relational public diplomacy	Mass Audience, Strategic Publics, Governments	Cultural exchanges and exhibitions, Educational Exchanges, Tourism, Documentaries and Films, Aid and funding through NGOs	Long Term	Dialogue and Advocacy	Relational Partnerships

Descriptive Integrated Public Diplomacy

See Table 2.1.

CONCLUSION

Beijing’s ‘Soft Power’ has often been termed as ‘Charm Offensive’ to represent its nuance image globally. China’s obsession with the ‘Soft Power’ has a strong external influence, mainly from the Western cultural predominance over the past three centuries. In addition, Western media hegemony has enabled incremental expansion to the Western culture, a source of Chinese apprehension. China sees its ‘Soft Power’ in the cultural context as the leading source of Chinese soft expansion and internal cohesion. Therefore, the External, the quest for Chinese global influence passes through expanding China’s ‘Cultural Soft Power’ and

‘Globalization of Chinese Media.’ Whereas, internally, the Chinese have been boosting their cultural primacy and political system for the domestic public. Simultaneously, the censorship of Western media and the bar on external social media in China is aimed at dissuading the Western cultural narrative not to effect Chinese social cohesion.

Meanwhile, China has employed PD as the primary tool of soft power. The complex and multifaceted phenomenon, PD, forms the operational groundwork for soft power to work as a crucial foreign policy tool that tends to shape the desired image of a country amongst the domestic and international masses. China in the past two decades has invested billions into its soft power campaigns in order to project its positive image on the global stage. As a result, the strategic utilization of soft power has strengthened Beijing’s as a rising power narrative.

Beijing has shown caution in its soft power pursuits and application in order to persuasively engage with the American people and to develop positive-sum relationship with the US. China’s PD strategy has been purposefully crafted to secure and further its soft power resources in the US. This study uses integrated public diplomacy, to examine how it is helping China to further its PD activities across the globe, with US-focused pursuits. Golan’s model aligns with the soft power strategies—both theoretically and practically—enabling a strategic communication approach that can help constructively influence the perception, as well as attitude, of the targeted audience. The following chapters will debate if the strategic application of these sources has a valuable impact on China’s soft power pursuits or not.



From ‘Rise of China’ to ‘Peaceful Development’: An Analysis of Competing Discourses

INTRODUCTION

Debate on the ‘Rise of China’ is center-staged in the Western political elite and academia for three decades. China’s rise is arguably the most consequential episode of global politics since the disintegration of USSR. The rapid economic development has made China a leading power contender on the global stage.¹ For a socialist country embedded in central economic planning, China’s economic transformation is unprecedented. Successor to Chairman Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, is attributed to be the architect of China’s economic uplift. His economic plan was based on ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ (domestic socio-economic reforms), an aberration from Mao’s era of central planning.² For Deng, capitalism was a progressive and competitive force and would be instrumental in China’s economic uplift. Deng allowed market-based demand and supply mechanisms under the oversight of state-regulated

¹ Jing Jing, “Chinese and Western Interpretations of China’s “Peaceful Development” Discourse: A Rule-Oriented Constructivist Perspective” *JCIR*, 2:1 (2014): 1.

² Kean Fan Lim, “‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’: Uneven Development, Variegated Neoliberalization and the Dialectical Differentiation of State Spatiality” *Progress in Human Geography*, 38:2 (2014): 222.

capitalism to tackle open market uncertainties.³ Deng's economic acumen resulted in huge economic gains, showing three decades of an average ten percent GDP growth rate for China from 1978 onwards.⁴ Consequently, around 700 million Chinese were alleviated from poverty,⁵ and modernization of China in the scientific, educational, and socioeconomic spheres took place, transforming an agro-based economy into an industrial giant.

As China's influence grows as a significant global player, its impact on the geopolitical and economic stage becomes more evident.⁶ This ascent has triggered fervent discussions among international politics scholars, who have diverging opinions on the potential implications of a rising China for the global political order. The twenty-first century has been marked by a shift in power dynamics, with China being at the center of this debate. The rise of China poses a challenge to the longstanding Western-dominated international system led by the United States.⁷ Chinese foreign policy expert Yong Deng argues that the People's Republic is poised for status, prestige, and legitimacy in international relations with assurance of nonthreatening intent to the world.⁸ Nevertheless, the struggle for power in International Politics is a high-stakes game where material capabilities are transferred into military power for relative gains.⁹ The United States is wary of the Chinese economic and military

³ Ken Moak and Miles W.N. Lee, *China's Economic Rise and Its Global Impact*, (New York: Macmillan, 2015): 91; also see Barry Naughton, *Growing Out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978–1993* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 62; and Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011): 430.

⁴ Wayne M. Morrison, "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States" Congressional Research Service (December 17, 2013): 3.

⁵ Tan Weiping, "Chinese Approach to the Eradication of Poverty: Taking Targeted Measures to Lift People out of Poverty" Speech at the Expert Panel on the Implementation of the Third UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027), Addis Ababa, April 18, 2018.

⁶ Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Rise of China" *Foreign Affairs*, (November/December 1993).

⁷ Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?" *Foreign Affairs*, 90:2 (March/April 2011): 3.

⁸ Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*

ascend and envisages the PRC as its viable contender on the world stage. For the United States, the rise of China as a potential disruptor could unsettle the existing global order and be a source of potential showdown in the future.¹⁰ In the post-Soviet threat assessments, the United States envisaged China as a potential rising power that could act as hegemon to unsettle its superpower status.¹¹ The end of the 1990s saw the 'Rising China' debate transcended into China's 'Threat theory' in the United States academic discourse.¹² Such projection in academic scholarship has gained considerable attention since the term 'Rising China' emerged in the academic lexicon in the 1990s.

Theoretically, the 'Rise of China' debate requires carefully examining different underlying questions, which have made Western academicians anxious. The Western IRT proposes various propositions to answer complex questions on 'China's Rise.' For instance, Is China a revisionist power? Is China vying for a Super Power status? Would China's rise to superpower status go through war? What would be the impact of the 'Rise of China' on global order? Most Western scholars analyzing the 'Rise of China' tend to approach the subject through the perspectives of Power Transition Theory and different strands of Realism.¹³ These theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the dynamics of global power shifts and the implications of China's ascendancy on the international stage. Additionally, Balance of Power and Hegemonic Stability theories offer distinct explanations for the phenomenon of China's rise, presenting varying viewpoints on how the global order might be affected.

On the other hand, liberalism and constructivism, which are part of Western International Relations Theory IRT, provide valuable insights for

¹⁰ Zhao Quansheng and Liu Guoli, "China rising: theoretical understanding and global response" in Zhao Quansheng and Liu Guoli, ed., *Managing the China Challenge: Global Perspectives* (New York: Rutledge, 2009): 5.

¹¹ "Defense Planning Guidelines: 1994–1992" Washington DC. (1992): 47, <https://www.archives.gov> accessed May 15, 2017; and Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: The Plan to Defeat America*, (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2000): 12; Emma V. Broomfield, "Perceptions of Danger: The China Threat Theory" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 12:35 (2003): 266.

¹² Emma V. Broomfield, "Perceptions of Danger: The China Threat Theory" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 12:35 (2003): 266.

¹³ M. Taylor Fravel, "International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion" *International Studies Review*, 12 (2010): 505.

understanding China's rise from alternative angles. Liberalism emphasizes the importance of economic interdependence, international institutions, and the potential for cooperation among nations, shedding light on potential avenues for managing China's ascent in a peaceful and constructive manner. Meanwhile, constructivism highlights the significance of ideas, norms, and identity in shaping states' behavior, which offers a different dimension to comprehend China's actions and intentions during its rise.

Western International Relations Theory and the 'Rise of China'

a. Power Transition Theory

Power transition theory establishes that conflict will likely occur when a rising power challenges a status quo power.¹⁴ A.F.K. Organski, in his book *World Politics*, predicted in the 1950s that China had already claimed the spot of a great power¹⁵ and predicted a great power showdown between China and the United States in the future.¹⁶ In the words of Organski,

China is a country that will sooner or later equal the United States in power. China's rise in power has been spectacular, and both she and the United States have found it difficult to approach realistically the new facts of international life. China, like the Soviet Union, does not seek to replace the United States as the leading nation in the world but also seeks to destroy the international order she heads.¹⁷

Organski's Power Transition theory rests on two critical analyses. First, the rise of a country is subject to its internal development. Every country

¹⁴ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 32; David Rapkin and Thompson R William, "Power Transition, Challenge and the (Re)Emergence of China. International Interactions" *International Interactions*, 29:2 (2003): 318, and George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics*, (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1987): 77.

¹⁵ Abramo F. K. Organski, *World Politics*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958): 103.

¹⁶ Ibid., 488.

¹⁷ Ibid., 488-489.

has its course of advancement and falls relative to each other. The second key factor is the presence of a hegemon who shapes the international system and sets the new rule of engagement.¹⁸ The emergence of a new power that challenges the status quo power into a conflict rests on dissatisfaction with the existing international system. Such a system cannot provide ample benefit to the emerging power.¹⁹ At the same time, the status quo power's unwillingness to reshape the rules of the international procedure for a revisionist power would end up in a conflict. China skeptics agree to the inevitability of a dispute during such a Sino-US power transition.

Robert Gilpin's 'Hegemonic Stability Theory' and George Moledski's 'Long Cycle Theory' both predict a hegemonic war in which rising China would eventually unravel the declining United States in an attempt to reconstruct a new Sino-led international system.²⁰ Graham Allison gave similar arguments by taking case studies of sixteen instances in the last 500 years where an emerging power has threatened the status quo power. Out of sixteen cases, twelve had resulted in war, and a conflict did not occur in only four points.²¹ The United States has been accustomed to rule the world for over a century, and the American Century is under duress. In this scenario, the three probable outcomes would be a catastrophic war during the power transition between the United States and China, a peaceful transition, or cohabitation based on twenty-first-century great power relations.²²

b. *Realism and the Rise of China.*

Realists also share the skepticism of China's Rise with the power transition theorists. Various strands of realism perceive China could pose a

¹⁸ Woosang Kim and Scott Gates, "Power transition theory and the rise of China" *International Area Studies Review*, 18:3 (2015): 219–226.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 221.

²¹ Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2017): 85–86.

²² Ibid.

significant risk to the United States and support a containing the Asian powerhouse.²³ Realist also presumes that with the decline of the US preponderance, China is likely to reshape the international system based on new rules of engagement for the international system. The declining hegemon will feel threatened, leading to a conflict between the two powers.²⁴ Classical realists like E. H. Carr emphasize that great powers maximize their military capabilities and fight wars to establish supremacy.²⁵ The great powers argue Nicholas Spykman, would rarely contend with modest power and continue to expand their military prowess.²⁶ Putting Carr's and Spykman's observations into perspective, China is an emerging power with various internal and external security concerns. It has unsettled geopolitical disputes with neighboring countries, including the Philippines, India, and Japan. The growing antagonism at the Taiwan Strait, strategic rivalry with the United States in the South China Sea, nuclearized Korean Peninsula, and growing energy demands require China to increase its military preparedness in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.²⁷ Therefore, China's national sovereignty necessitates a robust military buildup to address national security challenges. Such fears emanate from historical experiences.

China still torments the two hundred years of humiliation and exploitation meted out since the first Opium War in 1839. Squander of China through the Open Door Policy 1899; the Japanese annexation of Manchuria and the Korean War 1950–1952 have deep impact on the strategic thinking of modern China. Similarly, the Taiwan, and Tibet, maritime disputes in the South China Sea are some key strategic concerns for Beijing. Most importantly, China's unequivocal stand over Taiwan as an inalienable part of China, also known as the One China

²³ Jonathan Kirshner, "The tragedy of offensive realism: Classical realism and the rise of China" *European Journal of International Relations*, 18:1 (2010): 53.

²⁴ John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West Can the Liberal System Survive?" *Foreign Affairs*, 87:1 (2008): 23.

²⁵ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939*, (New York: St. Martin's, 1946): 75, 80.

²⁶ Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942): 20.

²⁷ Jonathan Kirshner, "The Tragedy of Offensive Realism: Classical Realism and the Rise of China," 59.

Policy which remains at the forefront of Chinese national security priorities. In the same vein, any attempt to alter the current state of affairs in the Korean peninsula through military means contradicts Chinese policy which seeks peace, stability and the territorial sovereignty in the peninsula. Up until now, China has provided both material and political support to Kim Jon Un's regime which faces international isolation otherwise. These threats require China to strengthen its military capabilities, especially in the Asian Pacific region. The expansion of Chinese military bases in the Asian Pacific region reinforces the skepticism posed by defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz. Chinese militarization of Islands in the South China Sea, a threefold increase in maritime naval vessels, and large-scale military exercises near Taiwan in August 2022 have raised alarms among the American partners in the Pacific. Similarly, the 2020–21 China–India skirmishes at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh also highlight China's increasing assertiveness making the neighbors wary about China's rising and how it would shape the region in the future.

According to Kenneth N. Waltz,

“China will emerge as a great power even without trying very hard so long as it remains politically united and competent.” Strategically China can raise its nuclear force of level of parity with the United States if it has not already done so.²⁸

The leading offensive realist theorist, John Mearsheimer, contends for an active effort to prevent China from becoming too powerful.²⁹ If not prevented, China would rule Asia like the United States ruled the Western Hemisphere. Mearsheimer argues that China's economic prowess would convert into military muscle and political clout. Such a situation would push the United States out of Asia as the Americans moved Europe out of the Western Hemisphere in the nineteenth century.³⁰ Only increased

²⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War” in G. John Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002): 56, 62.

²⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3 (2010): 385.

³⁰ Ibid., 389.

military capabilities would enable China to improve its military standings against other Asian rivals and the United States.³¹ Influential realist scholars such as Robert Gilpin³² and Robert Keohane³³ view the American economic power in decline. Though the United States still claims global hegemony, the rapid reduction in the Sino-US economic gap will allow China to emerge as an effective equalizer in the near future. Respectable economic surveys forecast that China would surpass the US GDP by the middle of 2030s.

Realists such as Robert Gilpin do not see power distribution as the primary variable in the international system. Gilpin sees the relative change in power over the period would be spurred by economic wealth.³⁴ In his seminal work, *War and Change in World Politics* he makes an argument that the revisionist state tends to rival the status quo power through revising the existing rule and norms of the international system. In such a case the power transition may result in a war. Gilpin calls great power interaction a 'Hegemonic War,' a war to determine who will take the lead to govern the international system.³⁵ In the view of Robert Keohane, the United States has been undergoing recurring decades of declines which coincided with the Rise of China and gradual economic, military, and political decline in the US power.³⁶ China's increasing economic growth and defense expenditure reinforces the realist perspective that China is likely to enter into a conflict with the United States. While acknowledging the rise of China, all realist strands are convinced that China is aiming for a revision in the existing international order through an overhaul, perhaps a new world order with Chinese characteristics.

³¹ Qin Yaqing, "Development of International Relations theory in China: progress through Debates" *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 11:2 (May 2011): 235.

³² Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³³ Robert Keohane, "Hegemony and Afterwards: Knowns and Unknowns in the Debate over Decline" *Foreign Affairs*, July/August (2012): 114.

³⁴ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 93.

³⁵ Ibid., 33.

³⁶ Robert Keohane, "Hegemony and Afterwards: Knowns and Unknowns in the Debate over Decline" 114.

LIBERALISM AND THE RISE OF CHINA

Liberalism thinks international relations are consistently changing and evolving. Unlike Realism, liberalism envisages people and institutions can improve if certain conditions prevail. For instance, international organizations can bring peace, and democracy can improve individuals and institutions within states.³⁷ The liberal international theory also conforms to the realist perspective that China's rise and would recalibrate the existing international order. Primarily liberalism sees China through the lens of the Kantian triangle, International institutions, complex interdependence,³⁸ and democratic peace theory. The liberal theory advocates China's assimilation into international political and economic institutions. Liberals believe that such assimilation would ensure a more rule-based international system, eventually pushing China to adopt Western democratic ideas and mitigate the conflict with the United States.

Liberals have long thought that China's economic integration would ensure economic and sociopolitical changes within China and transform the country into a liberal democratic state. For the past decade, a growing demand for correct financial information from China has led to the development of commercialized non-state media, which includes business media, environmental media, and the ever-increasing presence of international media inside China.³⁹ Though China lacks a free press and has an abysmally low free media record, the explosion of non-state media has informed the global public about contemporary China. The people and netizens have developed alternative information access by evading the media control mechanism.⁴⁰ These changes perhaps are not an immediate precursor to a democratic China but are significant in terms of how a staunch communist country has transformed itself and brought fundamental changes in its economic and social outlook. China is an integral part of the global economic system that has benefited hundreds of

³⁷ Jean Kachiga, *the Rise of China and International Relations Theory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2021), 83.

³⁸ William A. Callahan, *China Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁹ Thomas Friedman, *the Lexus and the Olive Tree*, (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 155.

⁴⁰ Susan L Shirk, "Changing Media, changing China", in *Changing Media, changing China* ed. Susan L Shirk (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

millions of Chinese to overcome abject poverty. Hence the economic fall-outs of a war with the United States would dissuade China from acting less belligerently within its region and beyond.

West knows that China is skeptical of Western democracy. The democratic skepticism stems from the historical experiences and various internal and external factor. the Century of Humiliation (1839–1948), the influence of Confucian heritage, China's political system and the growing wave of modern Chinese nationalism have circumvented China to embrace democratic ideas. While the Chinese liberals seek political and economic freedom based on decentralization and a more representative institutional arrangement, yet it seems unattainable in the foreseeable future. Many post 1970s authoritative regimes like China and Singapore have negated the notion that the commercial or economic liberalism could are a necessary precursor of political liberty. Similarly, the embourgeoisement of society and higher per capita income are no more the necessary preconditions for democratization. Therefore, it is challenging to determine whether China could endure an unprecedented political and economic anomaly characterized by a socialist political order coexisting with a capitalist financial system.

Chinese thinkers since the nineteenth century have advocated liberal reforms to modernize China, and such voices have not died down since then. The events of the Tiananmen Square of 1989 still yearning for a political change.⁴¹ The 2019–2020 protest in Hong Kong shows widespread appeal for democratic reforms. Nevertheless, the Liberal perspective, anticipating economic transformations and envisioning China as an integral part of a unified economic system, may not accurately grasp the reality of China's ascent. While China has extensive trade ties and significant foreign direct investment (FDI) interactions, particularly with India and Japan, geopolitical tensions with these countries underscore the fragility of economic achievements in the face of political disagreements. Therefore, the Liberal theory is overly optimistic in assuming that economic considerations alone will prevail over political disputes in China's external relations.

⁴¹ Jean Kachiga, *the Rise of China and International Relations Theory*, 94.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE RISE OF CHINA

Constructivism sets identity as central to states' behavior in the international system. The socialization of the state constitutes certain norms and behaviors that create the state's identity. States' interests and decision-making are also part of the processes that form the state's character. Factors, that make states egoists, such as interests, sovereignty, nationalism, and power maximization, are social constructs. These values are intersubjective and bound to change in the same manner as the norms and culture can change. The core argument of constructivism is that the states tend to promote favorable image/identity for managing domestic and international perceptions.⁴² For this section, constructivism helps us understand that China's rise repudiates or reaffirms the Western narrative on China's rise. China's identity has changed throughout human history and more in recent decades.

China's global quest for its rise represents constructing an image of 'Peaceful Development' that resonates with Chinese ideation of how it wants to be perceived. By amalgamating 5000 years of civilization and cultural clout, China mixes it with the core social values to represent a benign image for its audience. However, social construct flows both ways. For the United States, China is seen as a Rising State which poses a military and economic challenge. To offset the Chinese narrative, the United States construct China as a revisionist power aiming for a global resurgence. The problem in the US-China relations is a contrasting view of the two regarding China. Such a situation can lead to hostility and even a conflict. Nevertheless, why such conflicting viewpoints did not outbreak hostility between the two?

The constructivists believe that the International society is governed by norms that are evolving and subject to change. While both the United States and China represent different identities they adhere to the norms of international society. In a relational context, US-China could cooperate keeping their exclusive identities, while cooperating under the norms of international society. It explains that China's rise has not resulted in a

⁴² Benjamin C. Jamison "Constructivist Approach to a Rising China" *The Journal of Indo-Pacific affairs* (Air University Press, May 2021).

US–China conflict because China has adhered to the existing norms and at the same time contributed new norms to the international society.⁴³

Though voices of a constructive engagement with China have come from influential thinkers like Henry Kissinger and Joseph Nye who have advocated constructive engagement with China, nevertheless, such agents are few and far between in the popular discourse led by the realist school on China's threat. The books such as *When China Rules the World: the Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* see China preparing itself for a post-American world.⁴⁴ Thinkers like Henry Kissinger and Yan Xuetong have written about the realization among the elite in the United States and China about the future world order led by Confucius China vs. liberal democratic United States. The counter-vailing narrative on the non-liberal world vs liberal world has escalated in the previous decade. However, the theories help to separate facts from fiction by making a more objective analysis of a phenomenon like the 'Rise of China.' It is evident from the theoretical viewpoint that theories such as constructivism give an alternative to the American-centric realist perspective on China's rise.

Taking account of the previous discussion, the following section will help us understand the trajectory of successive US administrations concerning China's rise and their adherence to the realist theory or alternative approaches. The upsurge of anti-China rhetoric in the United States significantly indicates the changing perceptions and attitudes toward China. Realist theory posits that states prioritize their national interests and seek to maintain power and security in an anarchic international system. Observing whether the successive US administrations have aligned their policies with such realist tenets, focusing on strategic competition and safeguarding their interests vis-à-vis China's ascent, can shed light on the overall foreign policy direction. Conversely, an alternative course could indicate a shift toward cooperation or other international relations theories shaping their stance. Understanding these underlying approaches are indeed imperative as they not only shape the

⁴³ Qin Yaqing, "International Society as a Process: Institutions Identities, and China's Peaceful Rise," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3 (2010): 149. And Takeshi Uemura, "Constructivism and Chinese Studies," *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 13 (January 2018): 52.

⁴⁴ Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (London: Penguin Press, 2009).

dynamics of US–China bilateral relations but also impact their future course of action.

*'Rise of China' and United States Foreign Policy
toward China: 1972–2022*

For the Americans, the emergence of a modern Communist China in 1948 was a setback. The United States supported an anti-communist Nationalist government led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. From 1948 to the early 1970s, both states retained a hostile posture vis-à-vis each other until President Nixon visited China in 1972. The Sino-Soviet split and ensuing war in 1969 was instrumental in bridging the hostilities between the United States and China. The rapprochement with China was a tactical détente that sought to check Soviet military and political power.⁴⁵ The US Policy of rapprochement and Mao's opening were mutually constructive and consequential. Engagement with China was the United States Cold War era's national security imperative to deter the Soviet Union's imperialistic objectives. Whereas, for China, it paved the way for engaging with the world and nurtured three decades of scientific and academic ties with the United States, significantly impacting China's modernization.⁴⁶

Though the United States had encouraged China's modernization and facilitated entry into the global economy, nevertheless, it unanticipated China's unprecedented economic growth. The US National Security, from 1972 onwards was consumed with containing the Soviet Union with little threat from China. For instance, Ronald Regan's administration policy enunciated to abide by the spirit of Shanghai Communiqué⁴⁷ and foster good relations with China. The United States viewed China as

⁴⁵ Evelyn Goh, "Nixon, Kissinger and the Soviet Card, in the Opening of the United States 1971–1974" *Diplomatic History*, 29:3 (2005): 475.

⁴⁶ Jin Xiaoming, "The China-U.S. Relationship in Science and Technology" Paper presented at "China's Emerging Technological Trajectory in the 21st Century" hosted by the Lally School of Management and Technology Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Troy, New York (September 4–6, 2003).

⁴⁷ Refers to 1972 agreement between United States and China signed by United States, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. It brought an end to 23 years of diplomatic estrangement between United States and China.

a cooperative and friendly country with some shared interests.⁴⁸ During the Regan era, the United States was engaged in technology cooperation in peaceful nuclear technology and munitions/technology transfers to China.⁴⁹ China brought major economic reforms due to the favorable external conditions after the normalcy of relations with the United States.

Regan's successor George H.W. Bush also viewed relations with China as constructive and imperative for the US strategic objectives in the Asia Pacific Region.⁵⁰ Despite recurring tensions at the Taiwan Strait and the Tiananmen Square incident, President Bush sought normalcy in Sino-US relations to preserve China's path to economic reforms and trade liberalization.⁵¹ The United States' apprehensions of human rights abuses and the repressive authoritarian regime in China were either subsided by its strategic considerations or hope of economic reforms as a precursor of political restructuring.

In the first term, President Bill Clinton was critical of the US soft posturing vis-à-vis China. During his first presidential term, Sino-US tensions soared owing to President Lee Teng-hui President of Taiwan's private visit to the United States. Taiwan Strait also saw military activities with the US deployment of two carrier strike groups after Chinese military maneuvers in the South China Sea.⁵² However, through President Clinton's second term, Sino-US relations stabilized with high-level strategic dialogue on arms control, nuclear non-proliferation, and other issues took place.⁵³ Reassurance by the United States on its previous resolve toward bilateral engagement with China to maintain peace and security in the South China region and commitment to One-China policy brought Sino-US relations back on track.

The 1990s was truly the start of economic prosperity for China owing to Deng's economic reforms. The United States carefully watched China's

⁴⁸ "China in U.S. National Security Strategy Reports, 1987–2017" <https://china.usc.edu> accessed on July 16, 2019.

⁴⁹ "National Security Decisions Directives 1981–1989" <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov>, accessed on July 16, 2019.

⁵⁰ "China in U.S. National Security Strategy Reports, 1987–2017" 3–4.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3.

⁵² Frank Frost "United States-China Relations and the Clinton-Jiang Summit" Parliament of Australia, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group, Current Issues Brief 7, 1997–98, November 24, 1997, available at www.aph.gov.au.

⁵³ Ibid.

economic growth and improvement in physical infrastructure and human development indicators, however, no fundamental policy shift occurred vis'-a-vis' China. President Clinton's successor, George W. Bush's administration, followed his predecessor's policy of cautious yet constructive engagement with China. The 1990s saw a drastic increase in China's military spending yet it didn't ring alarm in the United States. In the subsequent decade, the United States was focused on eradicating terrorism and shifted its attention to Afghanistan, the Middle East, and North Africa. The 'War against Terrorism' constituted the single most security concern for the United States. In the 2002 national security strategy China was mentioned as a rising power and a concern in the Asia Pacific region,⁵⁴ however, the strategy did not propose any measures to check China's rise. The US National Security Strategy of 2006 outlined that Chinese leadership must recognize that its peaceful path could be disrupted due to old ways of continued military buildup, mercantilist trade policies, and supporting authoritarian regimes.⁵⁵ By this time, the US threat assessments did not consider China's economic growth and military modernization a direct threat to the United States. A statement by the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger termed Sino-US relations as 'potential partner in the construction of world order,'⁵⁶ reveals the US assessment of China back then.

It seems likely that academic discourse supporting the ominous 'Rise of China' did not permeate through the policy-making circle from President Nixon to President George W. Bush-era either due to strategic considerations or the United States' unrealistic assessment of China's potential as a future superpower. Arguably, the United States political elite's disregard to predict the rapid 'Rise of China's' economic clout and subsequent military modernization is evident from the lack of a clear policy perspective towards China. Traditional issues concerning the United States toward China, which include military expenditure, the

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Freund Larus and Shirley Naa-kowaa Martey Hargis, "U.S. President Obama's China Policy: A Critical Assessment" *Teka Kom. Politol. Stos. Międzynar.—OL PAN*, (2017): 10.

⁵⁵ "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America" March 2006, <https://www.comw.org>, accessed on July 13, 2019.

⁵⁶ "The Key Problem of our time': a Conversation with Henry Kissinger on Sino-U.S. Relations" September 20, 2018 www.wilsoncenter.org, accessed on July 17, 2019.

nature of authoritarian regimes, human rights issues, and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, have been outlined in defense and national security documents, recurrently. Since the Cold War, American Presidents have shown commitment to securing the United States' position in the world. But does that require the United States not to let China become too powerful?

In 2011, the President Obama's administration adopted a new approach toward China, known as the 'Pivot to Asia Strategy,' which marked a significant focus in the US policy towards Asia. The 2010 National Security Strategy had already identified Asia as a focal point for potential major confrontations, prompting the United States to concentrate its efforts on the region. Consequently, since 2011, the United States has actively strengthened its alliances in Asia, particularly in the Asia Pacific, forging partnerships with countries like Japan, India, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

During President Obama's tenure, the United States intensified its defense cooperation with India to enhance the modernization of the Indian military. The 2005 Indo-US Nuclear Deal paved the way for further strategic collaboration between the two countries in the Asia Pacific region. Despite these developments, President Obama's stance on US-China relations was not explicitly defined. The approach toward China was rooted in the principles maintained since President Nixon's engagement with China, emphasizing the recognition of China's peaceful 'Rise' and promoting cooperative diplomacy through official and people-to-people interactions. Additionally, the United States adhered to the One-China Policy and reassured its alliances with countries in the region.⁵⁷ Although the 'Pivot to Asia' strategy did not mention China, the US actions, such as deploying aircraft carriers in the South China Sea, a region considered part of China's sphere of influence, raised concerns.⁵⁸ President Obama's tenure arguably laid the groundwork for a potential shift in the United States national security policy toward China.

⁵⁷ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Indo-US Nuclear Deal: Altering Global Nuclear Order" *Strategic Studies*, 27:2-3 (Summer & Autumn 2008): 23.

⁵⁸ Mark E. Manyin, et al., "Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia" *Congressional Research Services* (March 28, 2012): 1, 8, 12.

US President Donald J. Trump took office in January 2017 with China as the primary concern throughout the presidential debates. A revision in United States policy toward China was a major agenda during his presidential campaign. As a Republican candidate with a populist agenda, Donald Trump repeatedly pointed out Sino-US economic rift,⁵⁹ intellectual theft,⁶⁰ cyber espionage, the North Korean nuclear issue,⁶¹ and currency manipulation⁶² as contentious issues between the United States and China. While the geo-economic issues were on the fore, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China, further galvanized the US–China tensions. President Trump and his administration's assertion of Chinese involvement in the development and spread of Coronavirus tensed the US–China relationship. Furthermore, the revision in the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2017 under President Trump was based on the assertion that a four-decades-old policy of constructive engagement with China has not provided the desired outcomes. The United States sees China applying its economic clout to assert a geo-economic and geostrategic position vis-à-vis the United States, making it a revisionist power undermining the international order. The escalation of a trade war between the United States and China and sanctions on Chinese companies working in the United States escalated tension between the two states.

The United States National Security Strategy of 2017 outlines China's disruptive potential.

For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China's rise and integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China. Contrary to our hopes, China expanded its power at the expense of the sovereignty of others. China gathers and exploits data on an unrivaled scale and spreads features of its authoritarian system, including corruption and surveillance. It is building the world's most capable and well-funded

⁵⁹ Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Says He Favors Big Tariffs on Chinese Exports" *New York Times*, January 7, 2016.

⁶⁰ Doug Palmer and Ben Schreckinger, "Trump's trade views vows to declare China a currency manipulator on Day One" *Politico*, November 10, 2015.

⁶¹ David E. Sanger, Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies Against Attack" *New York Time*, July 16, 2019.

⁶² Sam Meredith, "China responds to US after Treasury designates Beijing a 'currency manipulator'" *CNBC*, August 06, 2019.

military after our own. Its nuclear arsenal is growing and diverging. Part of China's military modernization and economic expansion is due to its access to the U.S. innovation economy, including America's world-class universities.⁶³

The National Security strategy further outlined China using economic influence and military threats to induce fear to comply with China's geostrategic agenda. The infrastructure projects such as BRI and CPEC are instruments to augment China's geopolitical ambition in East Asia and beyond. Growing Chinese military presence in the South China Sea and constructing naval outposts in disputed waters could obstruct free trade flow and indicate China's future military outlook. China's massive investment in its military modernization has insulated fears in the Indo-Pacific Region where military imbalance could diminish the sovereignty of smaller states. As a result, states are looking toward the United States for protection and alliances against any aggression.⁶⁴

Scholars see the US National Security Strategy 2017 as a turnaround in Sino-US relations. The 'convergence theory,'⁶⁵ which envisages a wealthier China would become more democratic and liberal, has not met expectations. In foreign policy outlook, the militarization of the South China Sea, assertiveness on a maritime dispute with neighboring states and government-funded mega infrastructure BRI programs aimed to extend Chinese strategic infiltration worldwide threaten the United States' security interests in Asia Pacific and beyond.⁶⁶ From 2017 it is not business as usual in Sino-US relations. The United States' national security has now been conforming to the theoretical viewpoint of realism and power transition theory. The present trends forecast that the trade war may spill over into military, diplomatic, and technological standoffs in the next few years. Moreover, any political transformation that favors democracy seems increasingly improbable, with President Xi Jinping

⁶³ "National Security Strategy of the United States of America" December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov>, accessed on July 12, 2019.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁵ Michael Beckley, "Conditional Convergence and the Rise of China: A Political Economy Approach to Understanding Global Power Transitions" *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5:2 (February 2020): 2.

⁶⁶ Nikki Haley, "How to Confront an Advancing Threat from China" *Foreign Policy*, (July 18, 2019).

embarked on his third term in office in March 2023. President Xi retains a firm grip on power with his extended tenure, consolidating the Chinese Communist Party's authority and tightening its control over the political landscape. President Xi has displayed a more robust reinforcing One-party System and suppressing dissent in his previous tenure. Such measures indicate that the prospects of democratic reforms are minimal in today's China.

Debate on the Rise of China in Chinese International Relations Theory

Chinese academic discourse on the 'Rise of China' and the scholarly views represents countervailing perspective from the Western discourse on the issue. Contributions by the Chinese scholars in IRT were instrumental in rationalizing the 'Rise of China' in the Chinese cultural context. The evolution of 'Rise of China' into 'Peaceful Rise' and further development into 'Peaceful Development' is primarily attributed to Chinese IRT scholarly contribution over two decades starting from the 1990s.⁶⁷ In their scholarly endeavor, Chinese academics went beyond rhetoric and developed their perspective based on mainstream IRT and ancient Chinese thought deeply imbibed in Chinese sociopolitical and cultural paradigms. It is pertinent to mention that owing to deep-knitted relations between academicians and policy-making, academic perspectives on the 'Rise of China' were appreciated and incorporated into official policy guidelines for Chinese foreign policy.

In 1995, for the first time in China, the term 'Peaceful Rise' was used by Shi Yinong to describe the future of Chinese foreign relations and future course.⁶⁸ Gradually, it started to appear in the Chinese academic lexicon. Three years later, in 1998, Yan Xuetong, in his seminal work *International Environment for China's Rise*, made theoretical arguments for the rise of China.⁶⁹ A few scholars cautioned over the term 'Rise,' which was not associated with the Chinese worldview. As a result, the

⁶⁷ Raviprasad Narayanan, "the Chinese Discourse on the 'Rise of China'" *Strategic Analysis*, 31:4 (November: 2007): 650.

⁶⁸ Dominik Mierzejewski "The Quandary of China's Soft-power Rhetoric: the "Peaceful-rise" Concept and Internal Debate" in Hongyi Lai and Yiyi Lu, ed., *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, (New York: Routledge, 2012): 66.

⁶⁹ Yan Xuetong, et al., *International Environment for China's Rise* (Tianjin, Peoples Press: 1998).

word ‘Rise’ soon fades away. In 2003, Professor Zhang Bijian proposed the concept of (*juqi*) ‘Peaceful Rise’ at the Bao Forum, which was received with enthusiasm and seemed more proximate to the Chinese trajectory.⁷⁰ Later in 2004, Xia Liping, and Jiang Xiyuan Zhu, in their book (Zhongguo he ping jue qi) *Peaceful Rise of China*, proposed an indigenous International Relations Theory based on the Chinese cultural perspective on the Peaceful Rise of China.⁷¹ However, the ‘Peaceful Rise’ idea was short-lived and dropped in the Chinese IRT soon afterward. In 2005 it was replaced with ‘Peaceful Development’ through a white paper entitled ‘China’s Peaceful Development Road’ (Information Office of the State Council, 2005).⁷² Such a rapid progression in Chinese image projection in theory and policy seems awkward but desirable.

Against Western domination in International Relations Theory (IRT) for the last one hundred years, non-Western IRT has no or very insignificant influence in germinating global narratives. The notion of ‘social scientificism’ and empiricism constituted Western legitimacy on discourse formation on global issues.⁷³ Mainstream IRT of Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism and Marxism were principal approaches and provided ample literature to understand a social change or global phenomenon. Mainstream Western prisms of IRT have saturated the literature on China’s Rise and its global implications.

Chinese contributions were necessary to address the existing void and provide countervailing discourse on the ‘Rise of China.’ China’s new international status and emerging role in international politics required Chinese academic attention.⁷⁴ However, there were two problems faced by Chinese IR academia. First, Chinese scholars mainly appropriated existing IR theories of Liberalism, Realism, Constructivism, or Marxism in

⁷⁰ Zheng Bijian, *China’s Peaceful Rise: Speeches of Zheng Bijian 1997–2005*, (Washington D.C, the Brookings Institute: 2005): 20.

⁷¹ Xia Liping, Jiang Xiyuan Zhu, *Peaceful Rise of China*, (Beijing, Zhongguo Social Science Press: 2004):143–144.

⁷² Jing Jing, “Chinese and Western Interpretations of China’s “Peaceful Development” Discourse: A Rule-Oriented Constructivist Perspective” *JCIR*, 2:1 (2014): 49.

⁷³ Audrey Alejandro, *Western Domination in International Relations: The Internationalization of International Relations in Brazil and India*, (London: Rutledge, 2019): 3.

⁷⁴ Hung-jen Wang, *The Rise of China and Chinese International Relations Scholarship*, ((Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013): 3.

narrating Chinese worldview. These scholars who were educated in the United States and were taught Western IRT had predominant western influence in their academic writing. As a result, they saw the Rise of China through realism or liberalism. Secondly, till the 1990s, no significant contribution was made to develop a Chinese International Relations Theory by native Chinese IR Scholars.

Qin Yaqing points out that the absence of Chinese IRT inspired Chinese academics to develop Chinese IRT using Western and Chinese theoretical traditions.⁷⁵ According to Qin Yaqing, in China, the development of IRT took place in three phases, namely Pre-theory Phase (1978–90), The Initial Stage (1991–2000), and The Deepening Stage (2001–07).⁷⁶ In the pre-stage, China's IRT focused on debates on Marxism to discuss the Chinese economic and political system. During this stage, it occurred to Chinese scholars to work on Chinese IRT and provide a Chinese perspective on international relations. The second stage, known as The Initial Stage (1991–2000) or The Theory-Learning Phase, is important for Chinese IRT for four reasons. First, theories of realism and liberalism formed the debate for Chinese external relations among Chinese scholars. The Chinese academia, concerned with the issues of Chinese security and sovereignty, employed realism. In contrast, those who favored cooperation and integration into the global economy were inclined toward Liberalism.

The second important factor in developing Chinese IRT was the translation of leading IR literature into the Chinese language. Translation of IR classics like Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* and Nye's *Power and Interdependence* augmented the understanding of Western IRT among Chinese academicians. Chinese scholars were exposed to scientific study and empiricism in International Relations. Thirdly, this period marked an exponential increase in the publication of IRT by Chinese Scholars in Chinese and International Journals of international studies. Lastly, the Chinese IR scholars who studied in American Universities brought mainstream IR traditions to China, which enabled new students to comprehend the difficulties of the international system. Familiarity with mainstream IRT helped scholars think empirically and divided them

⁷⁵ Qin Yaqing, "Development of International Relations Theory in China" *International Studies*, 46:1&2 (2009):186.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 187, 188, 189.

between two poles of Realism and Liberalism.⁷⁷ The split enabled native scholars to think differently about foreign policy, security, trade, diplomacy, and China's rise.⁷⁸ Consequently, Chinese scholars started narrating China-centric views vis-à-vis Western-dominated narratives on China.

The third stage, The Deepening stage (2001–2007), increased the translation and publication of IRT in China and caught Chinese scholars' interest in investigating other IRT, such as English Schools and Constructivism. The influential work of Alexander Wendt's constructivism was particularly appreciated among those Chinese scholars who were unsatisfied with liberal and realist explanations of world politics. More importantly, constructivism's fundamental idea of 'Identity' corresponds with the Chinese narrative of 'Peaceful Rise' on the world stage and suits an essential aspect of Confusions inspired Chinese philosophy of Self-Cultivation (修身養性)—which emphasizes the importance good moral character toward developing a harmonious society. At a time when Realism and Power Transition discounted China's rise as non-peaceful, constructivism helped China's quest to reexamine its identity as a rising power by supporting China's claim that power can rise peacefully as a responsible member of international society.⁷⁹

Constructivism allowed China IRT to go beyond evil and good debates. Tingyang Zhao's work on Chinese IRT is a great example. In his influential work on the concept of One's Own Way (*Tianxia*) (天下), *Worldview, The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of World Institution* and *The Contemporariness of Tianxia System and Benefits to China*, Zhao argues that the *Tianxia system* provides an answer to cohabitation and compatibility of civilizations.⁸⁰ *Tianxia* originated from the three thousand years old Zhou Dynasty, where minor dynasties coexisted as 'All under the Heaven.'⁸¹ Zhao's concept of *tianxia* has three meanings; one geographical, another psychological, and the last institutional,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 190.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 192.

⁸⁰ Zhao Tiagyang, *The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of World Institution* (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2011): 3.

⁸¹ Zhao Tiagyang, *Redefining A Philosophy for World Governance*, (Singapore: Palgrave, 2019): 1.

which are all essential and mutually dependent on one another. Geographically that *tianxia* is more than a physical place, but a way to think of the world which does not automatically begin from a national perspective. Psychologically, Zhao links the concept of *tianxia* to 'all the people,' in which there is no such thing as an 'outsider' because China's process of thought does not reject the 'other.' He says that Chinese cultural unity is the opposite of the Western approaches, which divide the world's peoples by race. Ultimately, Zhao contends that *tianxia* transforms enemies into friends and many into one.⁸² Sinologists have conceived the Tianxia system as a global order based on a shared interest in harmony.

According to Callahan, Zhao believed that Tianxia could be applied internationally to a successful system.⁸³ The correlation between identity and image became more relevant when the China Rise was seen as an opportunity or a threat.⁸⁴ A key influence in the development of Chinese IRT theory was the existing threat/opportunity discourse. Chinese scholars understood the propensity of danger over opportunity in Western discourse. Chinese scholars made scholarly contributions to mitigate the threat/opportunity gap on the pretext that China peacefully rises as a cooperative partner to the existing international order. Various Chinese Scholars echoed the dictum of Deng Xiaoping of 'Keeping a Low profile.' They adopted liberal principles of institutional reforms aimed at transcending China rather than competing with the United States.⁸⁵

Another response by the scholars favored a more independent approach to international society, i.e., any defensive posture on the Rise of China would inevitably undermine its sovereignty and instigate foreign intervention. Nevertheless, it should not reflect China's confrontational posture in the region and beyond.⁸⁶ Leading Chinese Scholars like Yan

⁸² Lelise Gobena "The Implications Of "Tianxia" As A New World System" <https://china.usc.edu>, accessed on December 4, 2018.

⁸³ William A. Callahan, "Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony?" *International Studies Review*, 10 (2008): 750.

⁸⁴ Hung-jen Wang, *The Rise of China and Chinese International Relations Scholarship*, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Peter A. Dutton, "Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission China's Views of Sovereignty and Methods of Access Control" February 27, 2008, <https://www.uscc.gov>, accessed July 18, 2018.

Xuetong and Zhang Weiwei⁸⁷ pronounced realism as a way forward for China. According to these scholars, national security is the primary consideration vis-à-vis economic interests, which are secondary.⁸⁸ Countries at a disadvantage in the international system could never attain discursive power⁸⁹; therefore, for China, it is vital to increase national strength and military power.

'Rise of China' to Peaceful Development: 1995–2019

In China, political discourse is influenced by many actors like the political elite, military, research institutes, and university academics. Especially academicians and scholars have considerable influence on policy issues. They often contribute to policy debates and serve as government advisors in different capacities.⁹⁰ China's political elite conforms to the idea that if China wants to assert global influence and improve its image abroad, it must reconcile with the Chinese academic discourse on the peaceful rise, which later evolved into peaceful development. Moreover, the Chinese elite wanted the international audience to be educated about China's political narratives and global intentions through public speeches, media outreach, and public diplomacy.⁹¹ Zheng Bijian's 'Peaceful Rise' thesis brought the Rising China discourse into the Chinese official policy perspective. For the first time, Zheng enunciated the Peaceful Rise of China as 'emerging precipitously in a peaceful way' at the Bao Economic Forum in 2003.⁹² Zheng's ideas were spoken on a few occasions by the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. On December 10, 2003, while talking to the students at the Harvard Business School, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao maintained that China's path to prosperity must reroute

⁸⁷ Weiwei Zhang, *the China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State*, 84.

⁸⁸ Yan Xuetong, "Chinese Realism: The Tsinghua School of International Relations, and the Impossibility of Harmony" *Theory Talks*, 51 (November 2012): 2.

⁸⁹ Kejin Zhao, "China's Rise and its Discursive Strategy" *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1 (July 2016): 542.

⁹⁰ Susan V. Lawrence and Michael F. Martin, "Understanding China's Political System" *Congressional Research Service*, (March 20, 2013): 37.

⁹¹ Hiroko Okuda, "China's "peaceful rise/peaceful development": A Case Study of Media Frames of the Rise of China" *Global Media and China*, 1:1-2 (June 2016): 121.

⁹² Zheng Bijian, *China's Peaceful Rise: Speeches of Zheng Bijian 1997–2005*, (Washington D.C., the Brookings Institute: 2005).

through the 'Peaceful Rise' and 'Development' and believes in a peaceful and secure international environment to promote world peace.⁹³

The narrative on the 'Peaceful Rise of China' was aimed at subduing the 'China Threat' debate in the West and projecting a favorable Chinese image in international Society in line with Deng Xiaoping's perspective of the 'Keeping a Low Profile' dictum.⁹⁴ Hu Jintao, during his Southeast Asian tour in October 2003, announced China's new foreign policy under the dictum of 'we're here to help,' explaining the peaceful intent of China for the Southeast Asian region.⁹⁵ In March 2004, during a press conference, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao announced that the concept of 'Peaceful Rise' contains five essentials that include (1) world peace, (2) based on China's strengths, (3) maintaining the 'opening up policy' to the outside world (4) would take generations of work (5) should be achieved through respecting the sovereignty of other countries.⁹⁶ China's top leadership's diplomatic overture implied the intent for a prosperous world through trade, investment and development that would enable China's peaceful rise.

Though the 'Peaceful Rise' projected a desire for a peaceful economic development course and integration into international society, Chinese leaders were wary of the implications of the term 'Rise.'⁹⁷ In April 2004, Premier Hu Jintao used the word 'Peaceful Development' at the Boao Forum for Asia held on Hainan Island, substituting 'Peaceful Rise,' which has since become the official Chinese position on external affairs and has

⁹³ "Remarks of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao", *the Harvard Gazette*, December 11, 2003, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2003/12/harvard-gazette-remarks-of-chinese-premier-wen-jiabao/>, accessed on December 12, 2020.

⁹⁴ Weiwei Zhang, *the China Wave Rise of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack: World Century Publishing Corporation, 2012): 15.

⁹⁵ "President Hu Visit Thailand, Australia and New Zealand" *Xinhua News*, October 29, 2003, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/hjt200310/a3.htm>, accessed December 18, 2019.

⁹⁶ "Premier Wen Jiabao's Press Conference at the Conclusion of the Second Session of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) on March 14" *People's Daily*, March 15, 2004, http://en.people.cn/200403/15/eng20040315_137493.shtml, accessed on December 12, 2020.

⁹⁷ Wu Guoguang, "The Peaceful Emergence of a Great Power?" *Social Research*, 73:1 (Spring 2006): 320.

caught attention worldwide.⁹⁸ In 2005, the State Council, for the first time, officially incorporated the term ‘Peaceful Development’ by issuing a white paper on ‘China’s Peaceful Development Road.’⁹⁹ This move was a reconciliation between theory and practice on peaceful development, becoming an official state policy.

The subsequent Chinese leadership adopted Peaceful Development; Secretary General Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang in 2013 reiterating China’s commitment to peaceful Development in public forums.¹⁰⁰ In his 2015 visit to the United States, President Xi, while addressing the American Public in his speech at the National Committee of US–China Relations, maintained that China conforms to the path to ‘peaceful development.’ Chinese political leadership conforms to the idea that China’s commitment to ‘peaceful development’ is a lesson taught by history and China could never adhere to recourse like hegemony or territorial expansion.¹⁰¹

On November 9, 2016, President Xi called to congratulate President Trump on his success and proposed a new great power relationship between the United States and China based on ‘non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect, cooperation and mutual benefit.’¹⁰² Reiterating the ‘Peaceful Development’ policy’ on the occasion of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping maintained that the path of ‘Peaceful Development’ is humanity’s shared destiny.¹⁰³ Later, during President Trump’s visit to China in November 2017, President Xi conveyed China’s commitment to the ‘Peaceful

⁹⁸ Hu Jintao, “Full Text of Hu Jintao’s Speech at BFA Annual Conference 2004”, April 24, 2004, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/93897.htm>, accessed on July 19, 2020.

⁹⁹ The People’s Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, “Full Text: China’s Peaceful Development Road” (2005), available at: <http://english.people.com.cn>, accessed on August 1, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ “Xi Vows Peaceful Development While Not Waiving Legitimate Rights” *Xinhua News* January 29, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90785/8113230.html> accessed August 09, 2019.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² “Xi Jinping made a congratulating call to Trump on his winning the presidential election of the United States” *Xinhua News*, November 9, 2016.

¹⁰³ “Full Text of Xi Jinping Report at the 19th CPC National Congress”, International Department Central Committee of the CPC, October 18, 2017, <https://www.idcpc.org.cn/english/events/>, accessed on December 12, 2020.

Development' path adopted at the 19th Party Congress to promote cooperation among major powers.¹⁰⁴ Commitment to 'peaceful development' shows China's adherence to peaceful coexistence and win-win outcomes in the ever-growing globalized and complex interdependent world. China also envisages a more significant and constructive role as a major power in the international system alongside the United States.

CONCLUSION

'Peaceful Development' is rooted in the historical narrative of peaceful coexistence, a harmonious world, and a developing China. Development discourse lays the economic, sociocultural and environmental concerns at the forefront in its interaction with the world in the twenty-first century.¹⁰⁵ Peaceful Development emphasizes that China's rise, partly military and economic, also constitutes a peaceful political and cultural rise of a civilizational state. China officially stands to the commitment to 'Peaceful Development,' projecting an image of developing China as a responsible and peaceful power emphasizing its intangible power sources.¹⁰⁶ However, critics of the Chinese Rise argue that jargon like 'Peaceful Development and Harmonious World' could not remove the threat posed by the Rise of China. While these slogans represent Chinese views toward its external relations, they still neither reflect foreign policy objectives China intend to achieve nor are they attractive to the outside world.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the practice of Chinese foreign policy based on economic and military rise could be in severe discrepancy vis-à-vis the Peaceful Development narrative.

¹⁰⁴ "Remarks by President Trump and President Xi of China in Joint Press Statement" November 9, 2017, the U.S. Embassy in China, <https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn>.

¹⁰⁵ David Scott, *The Chinese Century? The Challenge to Global Order*, (London: Macmillan, 2008): 5.

¹⁰⁶ Dai Bingguo, "Persisting with Taking the Path of Peaceful Development" December 6, 2010, Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

¹⁰⁷ S. Even Medeiros, *China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification*, (Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 2009): 8; Tang Shiping, "Projecting China's Foreign Policy: Determining Factors and Scenarios" in Jae Ho Chung, ed., *Charting China's Future. Political, Social, and International Dimensions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006): 129.

China has been well aware of the concerns of the Chinese Threat; therefore, projecting its favorable image abroad has become the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy, particularly toward the United States. The Chinese response to the apprehensions and changing the perceptions of foreign and domestic audiences have incorporated soft power as an integral foreign policy tool to offset the ‘China Threat Theory.’¹⁰⁸ As a result, China has been investing in its PD as a tool of its soft power-based foreign policy to project a favorable image. China has been investing great time in its soft power which is widely dubbed as soft power ‘Superpower.’ In this context, Hu Jintao’s speech to the 17th People’s Congress in October 2007 established soft power at the official stage of Chinese politics. Path to ‘Peaceful development’ was enshrined in the 18th National Congress to envision a new type of great power relation aiming for global peace and development.¹⁰⁹ China’s rise does not seek hegemony, the establishment of colonies, and traditional great power conflict but a more harmonious world order. China views that the challenges emanating from traditional and nontraditional security issues require multilateral cooperation and a more proactive role to be played by the great powers, especially the United States and China. The next chapter discusses integrated public diplomacy to address the problem of this research. It examines PD as a Chinese soft power-based foreign policy instrument to augment peaceful projection in the United States.

¹⁰⁸ Yiwei Wang, “Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power” 257.

¹⁰⁹ Yang Yang, “Interpretations of New Diplomatic Thoughts in the Report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China” 30.



China's Mediated Public Diplomacy in the United States

INTRODUCTION

In public diplomacy, 'mediated' has a distinct meaning compared to its usual connotation of third-party intervention in dispute resolution. An emerging field in public diplomacy, mediated public diplomacy enables governments to strategically present specific foreign policy issues through news and digital media to influence and gain favorable public opinion. By skillfully framing certain aspects of reality, communication is a powerful tool to reach a large audience through mediated channels.

The Cold War era saw an exponential growth in the role of mass media in diplomacy.¹ Revolution in information technology augmented the capabilities of broadcasting supported by the forces of globalization, which provided an impetus to ubiquitous growth of international broadcasting to attract worldwide foreign consumers.² The growing role of media in domestic and global public opinion and policy-making made the US politician Richard Lugar call the trend 'Medialism.'³ Media

¹ Eytan Gilboa, "Mass Communication and Diplomacy: 275–309 A Theoretical Framework" *Communication Theory*, 10:3 (2000): 276.

² Hamid Mowlana, *Global Information and World Communication*, (London: SAGE, 1997).

³ Abbas Malek, "Foreign Policy and the Media" in Donald H. Johnston, ed., *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications* (Cambridge: Academic Press: 2003): 609.

projections have often led to critical diplomatic decisions; and even have derailed diplomatic processes. It has often been criticized on the pretext of endangering negotiations and making agreements untenable. Nevertheless, global media has enabled governments to reach foreign publics while political leaders and the military recognize the importance of maintaining a favorable image to the international audience.⁴ The media revolution supported by modern technology has infused newer opportunities for states to communicate with global audiences surpassing traditional barriers.

A report by the United States Council on Foreign Relations outlined the need to incorporate public diplomacy in the media age. The ‘Public Diplomacy and War on Terror’ report suggested a coordinated effort of relevant government agencies, public–private partnerships, and equipping the State Department and allied departments with updated technologies to perform public diplomacy tasks. The report also indicated that foreign policy and image framing go hand in hand to emphasize the imperative to address cross-cultural misconceptions about the United States.⁵ In addition to traditional mass media, internet-based social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, and YouTube have become pivotal channels through which governments engage globally.⁶ Many studies have shown the growing impact of internet-based news to engage and mobilize a greater audience vis-à-vis traditional news media.⁷ To this effect, scholars have emphasized increasing the use of social media during public diplomacy to engage the foreign public. In the United States alone, two-thirds of the population gets news information from internet-based social media.⁸ Such a high number of the public using social media could be an opportunity for governments to preset their respective point of view

⁴ Joseph Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 18.

⁵ Peter G. Peterson, “Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism” *Foreign Affairs*, 81:5 (2002): 74, 75.

⁶ Nojin Kwak, et al. “Honey, I Shrunk the World! The Relation between Internet Use and International Engagement” *Mass Communication and Society*, 9:2 (2006): 193–194.

⁷ Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001):139; Christopher E. Beaudoin, “The independent and interactive antecedents of international knowledge” *International Communication Gazette*, 66:5 (2004): 464.

⁸ Katerina Eva Matsa, Elisa Shearer, “News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2018” *Pew Research Center* September 10, 2018.

on strategic issues directly through foreign audiences. Therefore, more skillful practitioners must understand global media's impact and influence on foreign audiences.⁹

The intricate relationship of political processes with media has brought huge investments by governments in global media broadcasting channels.¹⁰ For instance, Qatar provided \$137 million to *Al-Jazeera* to initiate its launch in 2006.¹¹ The well-known and documented state-sponsored broadcast includes Great Britain *BBC*, *CCTV* of China, *France24* of France, and German state-owned international Broadcast *Deutsche Welle*.¹² Mediatized public diplomacy campaigns have been enormously influential in positive publicity campaigns by countries. National broadcast media has become important tool countries use as strategic use of Mediated Public Diplomacy. *Al-Jazeera* network of Qatar,¹³ *Al Arabia*, controlled by Saudi Arabia, *BBC* network of Britain, *CNN* of the United States, and *Xinhua* Global News Agency of China are a few among others known to be projecting national interests.¹⁴ International broadcasting refers to the sponsored content aimed at the foreign audience through electronic media to shape or change the opinion of the foreign public and leaders through news, information, or entertainment content.¹⁵ It has to be recognized that broadcasting has become a strategic tool in today's PD. The ownership of worldwide broadcasting networks elevated the idea

⁹ Kathy Fitzpatrick, Jami Fullerton and Alice Kendrick, "Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual and Practical Connections" *Public Relations Journal*, 7:4 (2013): 17.

¹⁰ Shawn Powers and Tal Samuel-Azran, "Conceptualizing International Broadcasting as Information Intervention" in Guy J. Golan, Sung-un Yang and Dennis F. Kinsey, ed., *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy Communication and Engagement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015): 252.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Si Si, "Expansion of International Broadcasting The Growing Global Reach of China Central Television" Working Paper, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (July 2014): 2.

¹³ Samuel-Azran, "Al-Jazeera, Qatar, and New Tactics in State-Sponsored Media Diplomacy."

¹⁴ Guy Golan, "Integrated Public Diplomacy" 1253.

¹⁵ Monroe Price, "Public Diplomacy and Transformation of International Broadcasting" *Comparative Media Law Journal*, 1 (2003): 72.

of mediated Public diplomacy. By acting as gatekeepers the governments rely on the media to project the nation's image to the global audience.¹⁶

Chinese Mediated Diplomacy

Mediated Public Diplomacy is pivotal in strategically utilizing media subsidies to shape public opinion concerning specific foreign policy issues. Through this component, governments gain the ability to influence news coverage and digital media platforms, ultimately striving to secure favorable public sentiment abroad. The impact of media-driven efforts in shaping international relations and promoting positive national images is well proven. In the Chinese-mediated diplomacy campaigns, culture remains a core element in Chinese 'Soft Power' based media campaigns.¹⁷ Despite being a one-party state considered authoritarian, China has demonstrated the actualization of media framing to project its global soft power. China has used its culture in media framing strategies to neutralize antagonistic views among international audiences fueled by China's rise.¹⁸

China has galvanized the idea of developing a 'Harmonious Society' based on traditional Chinese values of harmony between humanity and nature. The CPC has found a common thread between a Harmonious Society with soft power. The CPC has projected that Chinese culture has more global appeal to address common world problems of poverty, hunger, development, and conflict, which could be better addressed by adopting the Chinese perspective.¹⁹ China has been continuously framing its Confucius institutions and other soft power-based projects through mediated mainstream and social media to the global audience.²⁰ The later

¹⁶ Guy Golan "Integrated Public Diplomacy" 1253.

¹⁷ Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy, "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: the Ongoing Debate" in Carola McGiffert, ed., *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World* (Washington D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies: 2008): 31.

¹⁸ Jing Wang, "Framing Chinese Advertising: Some industry perspectives on the production of culture" *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 17:3 (2003): 255.

¹⁹ Mingjiang Li, "Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospect" IDSS/Working Paper 1 (September 2008): 6.

²⁰ Zheng Yue and Wei Xinyi, "Construction of China's Soft Power: Comparing News Coverage of the Confucius Institute Project in China and U.S. Media" *Global Media Journal*, 16:31 (2018): 3.

part of this chapter includes a detailed review of China's experience using mediated public diplomacy in the United States.

Studies have shown the growing impact of social media on PD in the past two decades. Juyan Zhang argues that Americans are leaders in the social media-based 'Public Diplomacy 2.0' and digital diplomacy to rationalize their foreign policy actions to the wary foreign audience.²¹ For instance, President Obama administration used social media for strategic communication in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since then, social media has served the purpose of 'engagement diplomacy' with key stakeholders and the foreign public.²² Other states have followed suit and countries across the globe have adopted social media-based diplomacy. Zhang and other scholars like Tony Jacques and Igor Ansoff see Strategic Issue Management (SIM) looking at social media as a strategic issue management purpose for public diplomacy. Where social media has become an important part of public diplomacy, it would serve the equally important function of identification and responses to strategic issues.²³ In contemporary international politics, governments cannot remain indifferent to the growing influence of foreign media.²⁴ States are entangled in various political issues internally and externally, including territorial disputes, trade issues, and political issues ranging from human rights, immigration, and the environment.²⁵ In this context, mediated public diplomacy helps respond by shaping foreign media framing during a crisis and improving

²¹ Juyan Zhang, "Public Diplomacy A Strategic Issue Management (SIM) Approach to Social Media" *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57:9 (2013): 1312.

²² White House, "National Framework for Strategic Communication" 2009, www.fas.org/man/eprint/pubdip.pdf, accessed on August 31, 2019.

²³ Juyan Zhang, "Public Diplomacy: a Strategic Issue Management (SIM) Approach to Social Media" *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57:9 (2013): 1315; H. Igor Ansoff, "Strategic issue Management" *Strategic Management Journal*, 1:2 (1980):139; Tony Jacques, "Issue Management and Crisis Management: An integrated, non-linear, relational construct" *Public Relations Review*, 33:2 (2007): 151.

²⁴ Guy J. Golan, "Integrated Public Diplomacy" 419.

²⁵ Shahira Fahmy, "'They took it down': Exploring Determinants of Visual Reporting in the Toppling of the Saddam Statue in National and International Newspapers" *Mass Communication & Society*, 10:2 (2007):150; Ammina Kothari, "The framing of the Darfur conflict in *The New York Times*: 2003–2006" *Journalism Studies*, 11:2 (2010): 215; Richard Rogers and Anat Ben-David, "Coming to terms: A conflict analysis of the usage, in official and unofficial sources, of 'security fence,' 'apartheid wall,' and other terms for the structure between Israel and the Palestinian territories" *Media, War & Conflict*, 3:2 (2010): 203.

the perception of foreign publics and elite. By interpreting it more simply, media is used by individual cognition to form meaning of an otherwise complex phenomenon or event.²⁶ At the community level, news media blends cognitive interpretations to make an aggregative impact by creating an opinion. Public diplomacy uses media to frame news coverage by including specific images while excluding other content to provide information about an issue or event, thus shaping public perceptions.²⁷

China's Strategy for Mediated Public Diplomacy

A 2015 '2015 China Media Consumer Survey Report—Unparalleled Chinese Media Consumers' survey concluded that many American viewers have switched to social media-based news channels due to expensive cable subscriptions. According to an estimate average American spends 11 to 13 hours 'listening, watching, reading or interacting with media.'²⁸ Online social websites have been in high demand among the US public because they maintain viewers' interest by providing diverse content.²⁹ With the declining reading newspaper trends, consumers are more inclined to use digital news sources, including electronic news sites, magazines, and online journals.³⁰

The technological revolution has brought mass communication as a novel frontier of competition among nation-states. Political narratives, conflicts, images, and sociocultural realities are shaped through mass media. Nations presently regard the art of image framing and agenda building as equally vital aspects of their foreign policy, as strengthening

²⁶ Dietram A. Scheufele and Bruce V. Lewenstein, "The public and nanotechnology: How citizens make sense of emerging technologies" *Journal of Nanoparticle Research*, 7:6 (2005): 661.

²⁷ Robert Govers, "Brand Dubai and its competitors in the Middle East: An image and reputation analysis" *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 8:1 (2012):50; Aimei Yang, et al., "Beyond a dyadic approach to public diplomacy: Understanding relationships in multipolar world" *Public Relations Review*, 38:5 (2012): 655.

²⁸ "Beyond Hybrid War: How China Exploits Social Media to Sway American Opinion" Insikt Group, Cyber Threat Analysis (March 6, 2019):15.

²⁹ Ethan Cramer-Flood, "US Time Spent with Media 2022." Insider Intelligence, June 15, 2022. <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/us-time-spent-with-media-2022>.

³⁰ "2015 China Media Consumer Survey Report: Unparalleled Chinese Media Consumers" (March 2016), 26–29 <https://www2.deloitte.com>, accessed September 14, 2019.

their economic and military prowess.³¹ In the twenty-first century, global media is an essential soft power tool by developing a direct government channel for citizen connectivity.³² Social media will likely take over global communication networks in the foreseeable future and serve as an essential instrument in global citizen connectivity. Some countries are already making a massive impact through international broadcasting by developing an elaborated network of media channels and social media outlets to present their respective policy perspectives to stakeholders and global audiences around the clock.³³

China is often associated with cultural soft power representing a 5000-year-old civilization in progress. China's propensity with the development of socialist culture to express people's enthusiasm and progress is not a linear path to be achieved in a vacuum. Gary Rawnsley argued;

with communications ... right at the heart of China's policy-making machinery (an achievement matched by few states), broadcasters were instructed to be more proactive in their conduct of public diplomacy on behalf of the nation and its international interests.³⁴

President Hu Jintao called for socialist culture and the projection of Chinese culture and 'Soft Power' to the outside world. President Hu stated that;

the only way to invigorate culture is to promote innovation in its content and form, its structure and mechanism, and its means of dissemination from the high starting point of our and release and develop its productive force.³⁵

Hu further added that China must;

³¹ Gay Golan, "The Case for Mediated Public Diplomacy" *Diplomatic Courier*, July 19, 2013.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gary D. Rawnsley, "To know us is to love us: Public diplomacy and international broadcasting in contemporary Russia and China" *Politics*, 35 (2015): 279.

³⁵ Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress, "Promoting Vigorous Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture" *China Daily*, October 24, 2007.

create more excellent, popular works that reflect the people's principal position in the country and their real life. China must vigorously develop the cultural industry, launch major projects to lead the industry as a whole, speed up the development of cultural industry bases and clusters of cultural industries with regional features, nurture key enterprises and strategic investors, create a thriving cultural market and enhance the industry's international competitiveness.³⁶

Hu Jintao's report reflected Chinese intentions of media commercialization and intensification of media projection for Chinese cultural soft power. In the same statement, Hu emphasized that;

"We must step up the development of the press, publishing, radio, film, television, literature and art, cleaving to correct guidance and fostering healthy social trends" China "will strengthen efforts to develop and manage Internet culture and foster a good cyber environment."³⁷

President Xi Jinping has often voiced his support for Chinese media to enhance its communication capacity, go global, and present the Chinese narrative to the world.³⁸ In November 2017, on World Journalist Day, President Xi Jinping reminded Chinese journalists to promote China's favorable projection worldwide³⁹ and counter propaganda against their nation's image. The statement by the Chinese political elite is indicative of country's growing obsession with positive global image to facilitate its economic credentials. Corresponding concerns for Chinese leadership is that its image would be crucial in assessing its intentions among the global audience.⁴⁰ According to the China Institute of International Studies, China's perception is formed by international media which is mainly

³⁶ "Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 17th CPC Party Congress" *China Daily*, October 24, 2007.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "China's Xi urges state media to boost global influence" *Reuters*, February 19, 2016.

³⁹ "'Sing for the New Era': Chinese Journalists Told to Spread the Word on Xi Jinping's Ideology" *South China Morning Post*, November 8, 2017.

⁴⁰ Ross Robert and Alastair Ian Johnston. "Introduction" in Alastair Ian Johnston and Robert Ross, ed., *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006): 5.

controlled by Western states.⁴¹ In hindsight, China does not hold ample space and influence in the global communication sphere, is supported by Li Changchun, who observed the limitation of China to represent its narrative emphatically.⁴² In the case of China, Mediated Public diplomacy literature examines different public relations mediums, including TV and print ads,⁴³ Social media,⁴⁴ government-sponsored satellite channels,⁴⁵ national news agencies,⁴⁶ use of op-eds,⁴⁷ and information subsidies managed by governments.

However, there are concerns regarding the Chinese approach to media management. Critics argue that China has applied a state-centered, top-down approach to image management and media control.⁴⁸ China has used state-controlled broadcast and social media through paid advertising to influence US public opinion. China has used these mediums to create a benign and cooperative image, which supplements China's strategic goals. Also, Chinese Media in the United States has been blamed for framing positive stories regarding Taiwan, Uyghur ethnic minority issues, human rights, and domestic restrictions on media and social media. Likewise, China has been tempering the rule of engagement by applying stringent control on domestic mediums of information while using operating space in liberal societies to pursue international public relations campaigns.

⁴¹ Qu Xing, et al., "Mechanisms and Interests of the Western Media in Shaping China's Image" *Beijing: China Institute of International Studies*, (September 14, 2012).

⁴² Xiaoying, Liu "World Class Media and the Era of China's International Right to Speak" *Modern Communication*, 2 (2010): 18.

⁴³ Kathy Fitzpatrick, et al., "Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual and Practical Connections" *Public Relations Journal*, 7:4 (2013): 5.

⁴⁴ C. Hayden, "Beyond the "Obama effect": Refining the instruments of engagement through US public diplomacy" *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55:6 (2011): 7.

⁴⁵ Tal Samuel-Azran, "Al-Jazeera, Qatar, and new tactics in state-sponsored media diplomacy" *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57: 9 (2013):1295.

⁴⁶ Zhuging Cheng, et al., "The second-level agenda building function of the Xinhua News Agency: Examining the role of government-sponsored news in mediated public diplomacy" 249.

⁴⁷ Gay Golan, "The gates of op-ed diplomacy: Newspaper framing the 2011 Egyptian revolution" *International Communication Gazette*, 75 (2013): 9.

⁴⁸ Weidong Li RuixueJia, "Public diplomacy networks: China's public diplomacy communication practices in twitter during Two Sessions" *Public Relations Review*, 46:1 (March 2020): 10.

*China's Mediated Public Diplomacy through Broadcast Media
in the United States*

To improve China's image, President Hu Jintao, emphasized expanding Chinese media for domestic and international audiences. He saw international media as integral for building a positive image and favorable public opinion of China. Referring to CCTV, he emphasized that it serves as a platform to showcase China to the international community and to convey information about the country to the world.⁴⁹ China considers international broadcasting imperative in global image wars. It is key to China's mediated public diplomacy to show ubiquitous visibility among mainstream broadcasting.⁵⁰ Similarly, Liu Yunshan, who served as the head of the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP, emphasized the linkage between powerful communication mediums and public opinion.⁵¹ Chinese intent toward international broadcasting shows a predilection for strategic presence and use of media in the foreign policy domain. Hence mediated public diplomacy practically serves this purpose.⁵²

China's journey to satellite television broadcasting started in 1986 and a year later China Central Television (CCTV) telecasted programs. In 2003 CCTV entered the US market with its English language channel and made headway for further global media expansion. Under Premier Zhu Rongji China's 'Go Global' policy was officially launched to project China's favorable image in a US-dominated media landscape.⁵³ The 'Go Global' policy was aimed at showcasing Chinese culture, society, tourism, economic progress, industrial potential, and the candid life of a common Chinese to the world.⁵⁴ Hence the globalization of Chinese media through television, radio, newspapers, and film was the cornerstone of this policy. The digitalization of media and social media gave further

⁴⁹ China View, "China celebrates."

⁵⁰ Gary D. Rawnsley, "To Know Us is to Love Us: Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting in Contemporary Russia and China" *Politics*, 35:3-4 (2015):274.

⁵¹ Kingsley Edney, "Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21:78 (2012): 95.

⁵² Rawnsley, "To Know Us is to Love Us: Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting in Contemporary Russia and China" 275.

⁵³ Zhang Xiaoling, "Chinese State Media Going Global" 44.

⁵⁴ Daya Kishan Thussu, et al., *China's Media Goes Global* (London: Routledge, 2018): 2.

impetus to this policy in the coming decades.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the international media industry is saturated by Western media posed some serious impediments to Chinese media growth. Global media also required a huge investment for expansion.

Since 2009, China has invested more than US\$6.6 billion in its global media subsidies. The majority of the investment has been directed toward Xinhua, CCTV rebranded CGTN, China Official Newswire, Chinese Media Group CMG, and China International Radio. The CGTN and CMG also known as Voice of China, are central to China's 'Go Global' strategy in international broadcasting.⁵⁶ These broadcasters are entrusted with the responsibility to change the prevailing stereotype and create a brand-new image vis-à-vis China.⁵⁷

While the United States continues demonstrating its dominance and global imprint in the media spectrum with international news, movies, cyberspace, and published literature, China is making headways to compete with its competence in these areas.⁵⁸ The US political elite and public are essential targets in China's mediated public diplomacy strategy. Chinese ambitions to engage English-speaking population under the 'going out' strategy in 2000 led to the globalization of Chinese English language media. Given the unfavorable projection in the American media, international broadcasting is instrumental for China to engage the American people to showcase the alternative Chinese identity.

The CGTN stands as the most extensive Chinese television network in the United States. It has an estimated outreach of 30 million viewers in the United States with a total of 214 staff members.⁵⁹ According

⁵⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Lu Sun, "Development and New Approaches of Internationalizing China's Media: A case study of China's Global Television Network in Witness Perspective" *Global Media Journal* (August 16, 2018) and Xiuli Wang, *Winning American Hearts and Minds: China's Image Building Efforts in the 21st Century* (Singapore: Springer, 2020): 60.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁹ "CGTN America Taking you further", *CGTN America*, <https://america.cgtn.com/2018/09/10/cctv-america-taking-you-further#:~:text=A%20global%20news%20and%20documentary,households%20in%20the%20United%20States>, accessed on July 20, 2023. Robert Delaney and Nectar Gan, "Journalists with Chinese state broadcaster CGTN in US denied passes to cover Congress" *South China Morning Post*, June 2, 2019; Paul Mozur, "Live From America's Capital, a TV Station Run by China's Communist Party" *New York Times* (February 28, 2019).

to Voice of America, the broadcaster aims to promote Chinese cultural influence through its soft power globally.⁶⁰ China's economic credentials are recognized and Beijing aims to grow its cultural influence at par with its economic development.⁶¹ CGTN has augmented its social media profile in the United States. The CGTN America has 1.6 million *Facebook* followers,⁶² 287.7 K *Twitter*,⁶³ and 681 K *YouTube* subscribers⁶⁴ making it one of the largest social media following of a foreign media broadcaster. CGTN America disassociates itself from any Chinese state control. It projects a brighter side of China with content focusing on Chinese cultural projection, the economic rise, and 'Panda Coverage' showing the brighter side of China.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it has been criticized for being funded and controlled by the Communist Party; otherwise, it would cease to exist.

Likewise, Xinhua News, People Daily, World Journal, China Radio International, and China Daily Distribution Corporation (CDDC) handling China Daily (English newspaper) have attracted major social media following in the United States. Another Hong Kong-based semiofficial Phoenix TV, a global TV network founded in 2001, has programs including 'Phoenix North America News' and 'Experience America' and shows the life of the Chinese diaspora in the United States.⁶⁶ Phoenix TV has found substantial social media following in the United States.⁶⁷ Another media outlet working in the United States is Sky Link TV,

⁶⁰ "CCTV enters the United States to change the string" *VOA Chinese Network*, February 28, 2012.

⁶¹ Si Si, "Expansion of International Broadcasting The Growing Global Reach of China Central Television" *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Working Paper (July 2014): 4.

⁶² CGTN America, <https://www.facebook.com/cgtnamerica/>. (Accessed on July, 29, 2023).

⁶³ CGTN America, *Twitter*, https://twitter.com/cgtnamerica?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor accessed on July 30, 2023.

⁶⁴ CGTN America, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj7wKsOBhRD9Jy4yahkMRMw>, accessed on September 16, 2019.

⁶⁵ Paul Mozur, "Live from America's Capital, a TV Station run by China's Communist Party" *New York Times*, February 28, 2019.

⁶⁶ "Phoenix North America Chinese Channel" <http://phtv.ifeng.com/english/pnacc.shtml>, accessed on September 11, 2019.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

with a significant following in North America.⁶⁸ Apart from Chinese state affiliates media channels, other independent media outlets are operated by Chinese companies in the United States, such as *Wenxuecheng* with *Wenxuecheng.com*⁶⁹ is one of the most viewed Chinese language website in United States, Boxun news (a Chinese language news site) located in North Carolina,⁷⁰ *Backchina.com*⁷¹ has been presenting positive Chinese image, *The World Journal* (a Chinese language paper in the United States)⁷² and *Sino Vision Times* with website *secretchina.com* since 2001 and publishes free weekly newspaper since 2005.⁷³ With the United States audience as a primary focus of China's foreign media, special reports on China's development are posted regularly. For instance, China Radio and Television broadcasted gave unique perspective titled 'China in Transition,' showing economic transition in China on the United States National Public Radio (NPR).⁷⁴ The intended audience of these initiatives included not only the American people but also the vast Chinese diaspora residing in the United States, which represents a significant wellspring of Chinese cultural influence. China perceives its diasporic community in the United States as a vital component of its strategy for mediated public diplomacy.

This diaspora is deeply connected with the mainland through online streams such as iTalkBB, Great Wall, and Charming China. These online services maintain sociocultural and business links between the American-Chinese and the mainland.⁷⁵ For instance, *the World Journal*, a Chinese newspaper mainly focuses on business ties.⁷⁶ Since 2010, many independent Chinese media outlets have started operations in the United

⁶⁸ "Sky Link TV United States" <http://www.skylinktv.us/homepage>, accessed on September 11, 2019.

⁶⁹ 文学城, <http://wenxuecheng.com>, accessed on September 12, 2019.

⁷⁰ "Boxun News" <https://boxun.com>, accessed on September 12, 2019.

⁷¹ "Backchina.com" <https://www.backchina.com> accessed on September 12, 2019.

⁷² "World Journal" <https://www.worldjournal.com>, accessed on September 12, 2019.

⁷³ "Sinovision net" <https://www.sinovision.net>, accessed on September 12, 2019.

⁷⁴ NPR Special series on "China: Change or Crisis" <http://www.npr.org>, accessed on September 11, 2019.

⁷⁵ "World Journal" <https://www.worldjournal.com>, accessed on September 10, 2019.

⁷⁶ "Chinese-Language Media Landscape" <https://www.hoover.org>, accessed on September 11, 2019.

States. A few mentionable are Wenxuecheng, Duowei,⁷⁷ and Mingxing which mainly broadcast news in the Chinese language. The China Daily operating with the slogan of the (*World's Window to China*) primarily highlights the Chinese global perspective on the US–China relations and gives Chinese perspective on socioeconomic, and political issues to the American viewers.⁷⁸ Social media platforms abets the presence of these channels and broadcasters on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, giving greater access to wider and diverse viewership. An interesting aspect of Chinese media is that while the CCP directly sponsors the state-owned media in the United States, most of the private Chinese channels are allegedly sported by the Beijing. In 2020, the government designated five Chinese media and broadcasters entities as ‘foreign missions’ working in the United States, under the ‘Foreign Missions Act.’ This act has applied to Xinhua News Agency, CGTN, the People’s Daily newspaper, and China Radio International.⁷⁹ Allegedly these media houses have acted as veritable arms of the propaganda of the CCP (Table 4.1).

Twitter account of Chinese Media posts specific messages, videos, and pictures under the themes such as visits of Chinese Statesmen, Chinese development, arts and culture, natural beauty and landscape, and China’s footprints in innovation, science, technology, and sports.⁸⁰ Most messages by Chinese media are apolitical genres crafted to show an unbiased perspective or an independent approach rather than state-operated propaganda.⁸¹ However, political issues of strategic concerns Beijing, including maritime disputes, military built-up in the Strait of Taiwan’s status, trade relations, Nuclear Korea, and the developmental initiatives under the BRI, have been advocated often discussed and disseminated with official Chinese narrative. The Chinese government has strategically

⁷⁷ DW News, <https://www.dwnews.com> September 11, 2019.

⁷⁸ “China Daily Distribution Corporation”, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cd/usa.html>, accessed on July 29, 2023.

⁷⁹ “Senior State Department Officials On the Office of Foreign Mission’s Designation of Chinese Media Entities as Foreign Missions,” February 18, 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/senior-state-department-officials-on-the-office-of-foreign-missions-designation-of-chinese-media-entities-as-foreign-missions/>, accessed on January 22, 2023.

⁸⁰ “Beyond Hybrid War: How China Exploits Social Media to Sway American Opinion” Insikt Group, *Cyber Threat Analysis* (March 6, 2019): 22.

⁸¹ Ibid., 24.

Table 4.1 Chinese News Media on Twitter⁸²

<i>Media outlet</i>	<i>Presence on Twitter</i>
China Radio International (CRI) (now called @ChinaPlusNews)	April 2009
<i>Global Times</i> (@globaltimesnews)	June 2009
<i>China.org.cn</i> (@chinaorgcn) since	May 2010
<i>ChinaDaily</i> (@ChinaDailyAsia)	April 2011
<i>People's Daily</i> (@PDChina)	May 2011
<i>Sixth Tone</i> (@SixthTone)	February 2016
<i>Xinhua News</i> (@XHNews)	February 2012
China Central Television News (@CCTVnews) (superseded by China Global Television Network, @CGTNOfficial)	January 2013
	4 January 2017

utilized Twitter and other social media channels to promote its perspectives, policies, and objectives on these critical matters. This approach is Chinese communication strategy to sensitize American public on range of policy issues that are integral to China's national security concerns.

Chinese Social Media Outreach in the United States

A 2015 '2015 China Media Consumer Survey Report—Unparalleled Chinese Media Consumers' survey concluded that many American viewers have switched to social media-based news channels due to expensive cable subscriptions. According to an estimate average American spends 11 to 13 hours 'listening, watching, reading or interacting with media.'⁸³ Online social websites have been in high demand among the US public because they maintain viewers' interest by providing diverse content.⁸⁴ With the declining reading newspaper trends, consumers are

⁸² Joyce Y. M. Nip, Chao Sun, "China's News Media Tweeting, Competing With US Sources" *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 13:1 (2018): 100.

⁸³ "Beyond Hybrid War: How China Exploits Social Media to Sway American Opinion" Insikt Group, Cyber Threat Analysis (March 6, 2019): 15.

⁸⁴ Ethan Cramer-Flood, "US Time Spent with Media 2022." Insider Intelligence, June 15, 2022. <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/us-time-spent-with-media-2022>.

more inclined to use digital news sources, including electronic news sites, magazines, and online journals.⁸⁵

China is often discredited for its stringent control of social media within China. The Western popular social media websites like *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *WhatsApp*, and *Twitter* are restricted in China, where local social media such as *Sina Weibo*, *Youku*, and *WeChat* are used as a substitute. Foreign embassies in China, including the United States, Germany, France, India, etc., have been using local Chinese social media apps like *Weibo* to interact with local Chinese and attract wide attention. China has learned from the Western social media strategy. China has actively shown its presence in the global social media sphere through ‘Diplomacy 2.0.’ China’s Diplomacy 2.0 aims at the projection and dissemination of information to shape opinions on the issues that matter to China globally. Chinese officials have been *Tweeting* and made their presence felt on the official *Facebook* for engagement with the American people. China is keen to engage with the American youth, who are accessible through online platforms.

Chinese Digital Diplomacy United States

Twitter diplomacy is a new front in Chinese public diplomacy.⁸⁶ It has two distinguished aspects. First is to aggressively respond to any information or narratives aimed to build anti-Chinese perspective. The second aspect is to engage the public to promote China’s positive image. On key strategic issues, China had used social media to answer its critics in the west. China’s Twitter offensive amplified during the Covid-19 misinformation front. After China was blamed for mishandling and even engineering Covid-19 the official Twitter accounts by the officials Chinese Ministry doubled downed on the counter narrative. These accounts blamed the US government-sponsored labs, for manufacturing

⁸⁵ “2015 China Media Consumer Survey Report: Unparalleled Chinese Media Consumers” (March 2016), 26–29 <https://www2.deloitte.com>, accessed September 14, 2019.

⁸⁶ Huizhong Wu, “Move over Trump: China’s tweeting diplomats open fresh front in propaganda fight” *Reuters*, July 16, 2019.

and spreading Covid-19, and WHO was accused as a collaborator.⁸⁷ On the other side, Chinese Twitter strategy has been spreading the peaceful development narrative to the worldwide audience. Chinese embassies in most capitals across the world have Twitter accounts. Owing to the significance of US relations with China, the Chinese ambassador to the United States tweets and communicates with the American public as part of Twitter diplomacy.

China has used Twitter to direct two-way communication with the American public to provide a Chinese narrative and seek public opinion on the issues concerning the United States and China.⁸⁸ Similarly, since February 2018, the Chinese Embassy in the United States has also had an official *Facebook* page for social media connectivity. Most posts reflect China's cultural projection, such as Chinese New Year, documentaries on Pandas, and traditional Kung Fu. Alongside, political communication such as President Xi's essential addresses, the interviews of the Chinese ambassador to the United States on various topics, and China's 'Peaceful Development goals,' trade disputes, etc., are part of the content uploaded. China uses these Twitter accounts to dispel anti-Chinese narratives. For instance, in an interview on April 30, 2020, the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Chi Tiankai, pointed out China's medical assistance to the United States during the Covid-19 outbreak while dispelling the Anything But China (ABC) mindset in the United States used to play down Chinese contributions.⁸⁹ On Taiwan, the embassy's official *Twitter* account posted a statement on China opposing any contact or visit by Lai Ching, Vice-President of the Republic of China (Taiwan), or any separatist officials to the United States.⁹⁰ Since the pandemic Novel

⁸⁷ Anna Schecter, "China Launches New Twitter Accounts: 90,000 tweets in Covid 19 Info War," *CNBC News*, May 20, 2020. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/china/china-launches-new-twitter-accounts-90000-tweets-covid-19-n1207991cid=sm_npd_nn_fb_ma&fbclid=IwAR2K2KtETmGaLz8lOnK3vD5d3lFEYPv_SOZLjA5B6gSuCuP_to1eqaLFW6U, accessed on July 28, 2023.

⁸⁸ Ying Jiang, *Social Media and E-Diplomacy in China: Scrutinizing the Power of Weibo* (New York: Nature America Inc., 2017): 46.

⁸⁹ "Ambassador Cautions against 'anything-but-China' mindset" *Xinhua*, April 22, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-04/22/c_138998807.htm, accessed November 10, 2020.

⁹⁰ Chinese Embassy in US <https://twitter.com/chineseembinus?lang=en>.

Corona Virus outbreak, the embassy's Facebook page has been actively involved in projecting Chinese efforts to fight Covid-19 domestically and globally. These efforts highlight Chinese experience, health hazards, safety measures, and Chinese medical assistance to countries, including the United States.

Footprints of Chinese Apps in United States

Chinese apps are important source of engaging with the American public. Common American is using these apps for e-commerce, gaming, entertainment, etc., purposes. These apps have found a broad based consumer market among the American youth in the past decade. Some of the popular.

a. WeChat and QQ

China's state-owned enterprises have pervasive footprints in the United States. Alongside *Alibaba Group Holdings* another Chinese conglomerate, *Tencent Holding Ltd* leads the American entertainment and technology market. *Tencent's* social media applications like *QQ* has the largest overseas market with 540,000 downloads in the United States. Since its inception in 2011, *WeChat*, which is a component of *Tencent*, has grown to become one of the largest social media platforms in the United States. It serves various purposes such as e-commerce, online networking, and digital transactions. The Social media platform gained more fame in the 2018 US elections when many candidates used *WeChat* for canvassing in their constituencies especially the Chinese votes.⁹¹ Its growing number of users especially among the young American has taken *WeChat* into intermittent controversies. Often labeled as 'Overseas Chinese Web,' for being digital ethnic media, *WeChat* has been associated with multiple misconducts including misinformation during the US local and national elections, stocking racial frictions, and spreading misleading posts to gain

⁹¹ "China Media Bulletin: Top 2019 Trends - Global media influence, ideology push, artistic limits, surveillance leaks, China" *Freedom House Media Bulletin*, 141, <https://freedomhouse.org>, accessed on March 12, 2020.

more clicks.⁹² These allegations have not, however, reduced *WeChat*'s stock. With 2.47 million users in 2018, the *WeChat* user data from 2023 shows a remarkable increase in the United States, reaching 19 million Americans using the app, with an even growing number of e-commerce users.⁹³ Active *WeChat* users in the United States are second to 827 million Chinese using the app. In 2022, *WeChat* revenue from the United States stood at US\$ 1.8 billion, showing the app's impact and influence on the US social media landscape.⁹⁴

b. *TikTok*

With the accusation of *Musical.ly* (a music lip-syncing app), *TikTok* made its entry in the US market in November 2017. Soon the *TikTok* became a buzzword in the United States with 165 million downloads third most after China and India since its inception. It is owned by the ByteDance Ltd., a Chinese internet tech company. In fact, *TikTok* can be considered the fastest-growing social media app of all time as it has amassed over 3 billion downloads in the last four preceding years, one-third of all social media users globally.⁹⁵ According to Reuters, *TikTok* had 26.5 million active users in the United States in 2019, with more than 60% of users between the ages of 16–24.⁹⁶ According to the Congressional testimony

⁹² Jennifer Conrad, "China's WeChat is hot new venue for US Election Misinformation," *Wired*, October 18, 2022, <https://www.wired.com/story/chinese-american-misinformation-midterm-elections-wechat/>, accessed July 29, 2023. And Claire Wang, "How WeChat Fueled Chinese American Debate Over Affirmative Action," *NBCU Academy* May 18, 2022, <https://nbcuacademy.com/wechat-affirmative-action-claire-wang/>, accessed on July 29, 2023.

⁹³ Amanda Florian, "If the US Ban TikTok, WeChat Might be the Next," *Wired UK*, <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/if-the-us-bans-tiktok-wechat-might-be-next#:~:text=WeChat%20has%2019%20million%20users,people%20across%20the%20Chinese%20diaspora>, accessed on July 28, 2023.

⁹⁴ "Percentage of U.S. internet users who use WeChat as of January 2018, by age group" <https://www.statista.com>, accessed on January 17, 2020; WeChat Statistics, <https://99firms.com/blog/wechat-statistics/#gref>, accessed on January 17, 2020.

⁹⁵ Brian Dean, "TikTok User Statistics (2023)." Backlinko, Updated Mar. 27, 2023. <https://backlinko.com/tiktok-users>.

⁹⁶ Greg Roumeliotis and Yingzhi Yang, et al., "Exclusive: U.S. opens national security investigation into TikTok—sources" *Reuters*, November 1, 2019.

of the CEO of *TikTok*, the active monthly users in the United States have reached 150 million,⁹⁷ despite allegations of endangering user data.

In 2022, on average, Americans spent 45.8 minutes on *TikTok* daily, making it the highest used social media application in the United States.⁹⁸ Mainly, *TikTok* is used for creating 15–30 seconds short musical videos, dance performances, and funny acts. In the recent years the educational and creative content has gained large appeal on the app. This popularity has attracted widespread outreach in the United States. Major demographic appeal in the United States is coming from the American youth and teens aged 16–24 using *TikTok* for recreational purposes. However, other social groups, such as celebrities, entertainers, and sports-people, also use *TikTok* for fun and entertainment. Despite its popularity *TikTok* has attracted massive criticism from the Donald Trump and Biden administration. The allegations of possible cyber espionage, algorithm manipulation for disinformation campaigns, and possible breach of data to the Chinese government led the US administration in 2020 to ban the use of *TikTok* for active military personnel for data safety reasons. The ban was further extended to all federal government devices in 2022.⁹⁹

c. Other Impactful Chinese Social Media Apps in United States

Covid-19 pandemic created physical barriers and compelled people to work from home. Many online work applications such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Google Class Room became the online work place. *Voor Meeting* an online meeting app developed by Chinese company *Tincent* started its operation in United States in 2020 with

⁹⁷ “Celebrating our thriving community of 150 million Americans.” *TikTok Newsroom*, Mar 21, 2023. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/150-m-us-users>, accessed July 27, 2023, Carol E. Lee, “TikTok now has 150 million active users in the U.S., CEO to tell Congress.” *NBC News*, March 19, 2023, 7:00 PM PKT. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/tiktok-now-150-million-active-users-us-ceo-tell-congress-rcna75607>, accessed July 27, 2023.

⁹⁸ Maryam Mohsin “10 TikTok Statistics You need to Know in 2022,” *Oberlo*, 10 July 2022 <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/tiktok-statistics>, accessed on July 28, 2023.

⁹⁹ Noah Berman, “The US Government Banned TikTok from Federal Devices. What Next?,” *Council of Foreign Relations*, January 23, 2023. https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/us-government-banned-tiktok-federal-devices-whats-next?gclid=Cj0KCQjwrMKmBhCJARIsAHuEAPSIsvc2K627EvYozd3bPe6J1mU301xDPC4bXlQg7rTNVLANdyVGfEaAioqEALw_wcb, accessed on July 31, 2023.

major competition coming from Microsoft Teams and Zoom.¹⁰⁰ As the pandemic progressed and remote work became a more permanent feature for many businesses and individuals, the number of *Voov* users in the United States have grown. Other popular Chinese apps downloaded by the American in big numbers included *Temu* for online shopping downloaded 10 million times, *CapCut* for video editing downloaded 6.7 million times and *Shein* for online women clothing downloaded 6.3 million.¹⁰¹

CONCLUSION

Today's media is used as a cultural outpost and cultivated cultural imprints for promoting a country's positive image to the foreign audience. The entertainment television, online gaming, advertisement,¹⁰² and social media are instruments towards accessing the international markets and are important components of mediated public diplomacy. Mediated diplomacy instates China's story by shifting the American media narrative from China's Threat to 'Peaceful Development.' China's government control of external media is seen by many as a state-centered, top-down approach to image management and media control.¹⁰³

Nonetheless, China's strategy to engage the American people is in line with its Going Out strategy through mediated channels of communication. International broadcasting, social media, and cyber domain are venues where China's presence is gaining prominence every year. China sees these platforms as performing two essential and interlinked tasks. The first is to present a candid face of the Chinese nation and culture to the global audience. Secondly, it dispels the 'China Threat' narrative, instilling fear among the Western public that China's rise is a possible

¹⁰⁰ "Tencent Launched new videoconferencing App to Expand Overseas," *Tech Asia*, <https://www.techinasia.com/tencent-voov-expand-overseas>, accessed on July 24, 2023.

¹⁰¹ Sara Fischer, "Americans Hooked on Chinese Apps," *Axios*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/2023/03/27/americans-hooked-on-chinese-apps>, accessed on July 27, 2023.

¹⁰² Terry Flew, "Entertainment media, cultural power, and post-globalization: The case of China's international media expansion and the discourse of soft power" *Global Media and China*, 1:4 (2016): 285.

¹⁰³ Ruixue Jia and Weidong Li, "Public diplomacy networks: China's public diplomacy communication practices in twitter during Two Sessions" *Public Relations Review*, 46:1 (March 2020): 10.

source of conflict with the United States. China still lags behind in international communication power where American and Western media holds sway. International media communication enables the construction of discourse and image; consequently, the Western world can shape global public opinions. For China, mediated diplomacy could help rectify its distorted images and negative perception among the Western public, who are wary of a China Threat in the future.¹⁰⁴ Through various frames, media can help set news agenda to counteract the negative image created by historical reporting on China by media in the United States. Mediated Public Diplomacy could be instrumental in framing China's preferred issues among the audience in the United States by establishing news agenda on the transformation of China, Made-in-China's contribution toward science and technology, destination for tourism and economic achievements by the political leadership.

¹⁰⁴ Juyan Zhang and Glen T. Cameron, "China's agenda building and image polishing in the US: assessing an international public relations campaign" *Public Relations Review*, 29:1 (2003): 20.



China's Nation Branding in the United States

NATION BRANDING

Brand exhibits the reputation or image of any product or service of an organization offered to the public. A brand with no intrinsic value would not sell despite the best advertisement. Brands earn reputation through continual development by value-addition to the product. Similarly, like products or services, countries possess their brand value. Each country has a reputation, and the perception it upholds significantly influences its global standing.¹ In this sense, countries want to present a unique image that distinguishes them as a brand. The term nation brand was used by Simon Anholt in 1996 to indicate a country's reputation.² Anholt argues that branding holds a different connotation for countries where national identity, good practice, and economic competitiveness precede national reputations.³ Although scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers have shown a growing interest in nation branding, research in this area is still relatively new.

¹ Ibid., 7–8.

² Simon Anholt, "Nation-Brands of the Twenty-First Century" *Journal of Brand Management*, 5:6 (London: Henry Stewart Publications, 1998): 395–406.

³ Simon Anholt, "Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Politics" *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy*, 2:1, Article 1, (2013): 7.

Every nation can be seen as a brand with a combination of current and past associations relevant for marketing purposes. Though no universally accepted definition exists, nation branding could be referred to the use of strategic marketing strategies to enhance the image of a country. Nation branding has developed as a distinct field in public diplomacy. Though brand and country branding or rebranding is not new, PD has reinvigorated nation branding as image management for countries.⁴ Cultivating image management,⁵ such as world fairs for marketing the nation's brand, existed in the nineteenth century to project modern innovation and technologies.⁶ With the growing interconnectedness, tourism, investment attraction, export promotion, and cultural appeal are central to the nation's foreign policy strategy.⁷ Moreover, countries communicate through these channels to enhance their place's brand.⁸ National branding has assumed a more significant position in PD by defending and improving the image and sometimes neutralizing existing stereotypes about a country.⁹

Countries with a positive international image are inherently more appealing and well-regarded in the eyes of global public opinion. Global public opinion consequently impacts the reputation of a nation. Governments strategically engage with the worldwide public using various state agencies to cultivate a favorable perception. State agencies employ a carefully articulated idea through crafted pitches, official communiqués, websites, social media, etc.¹⁰ Symbols, key public figures, and slogans

⁴ Wally Olins, "Branding the Nation—The Historical Context" *Journal of Brand Management*, 9:4–5 (April 2002): 245.

⁵ Michael Kunczik, *Images of Nations and International Public Relations* (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1997): 7.

⁶ Göran Bolin, "Visions of Europe: Cultural Technologies of Nation-states" *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9:2 (June 2006): 189.

⁷ Simon Anholt, *Brand New Justice: How Branding Places and Products Can Help the Developing World* (Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005): 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ Ulla Hakal and Arja Lemmetyinen, "Country Image as a Nation-branding Tool" *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 31:5 (April 2013): 540.

¹⁰ Simon Anholt, "Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations" *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy*, 2:1 (2013): 1, 7.

add substantive value to the country's image.¹¹ In addition, every country carries some unique features; over time, these features become intellectual property and shape the global opinion about that country.¹² Thus nation branding is often assumed as a process of selling and promoting a country, city, or region.¹³ Therefore, for governments, brand, and branding are about adding positive tangibles to their brand name and branding their images most suitably.

Brands require branding, which is the process of promoting or managing the reputation of a product or service through organized planning and communication to add value.¹⁴ Considering nation branding has become so important in international relations, public relations firms are hired with marketing and brand management expertise to ascertain the strengths of a nation's brand, and complementing strategies are developed to branch out the country's reputation. As globalization has transcended the flow of information across borders, the country's reputation and image are constantly opined in the international media through advertisement campaigns. Countries are cognizant of this phenomenon and have been making painstaking efforts through nation branding to overcome stereotyped imaging and perceptions.

Notwithstanding, the fact remains that the truism associated with a country is formed primarily out of perception without even knowing the place.¹⁵ Some cliché warrant further investigation, such as America is a land of opportunity, Paris is a city of fragrance, all Italians are fashionable, and Africa is stricken with pervasive poverty and violence. Likewise, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria are the most dangerous places on earth.¹⁶ These

¹¹ Peter Van Ham, "Place Branding: The State of the Art" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (2008): 129.

¹² Simon Anholt, "Definitions of Place Branding—Working Towards a Resolution" *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6 (2010): 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.f.

¹⁴ Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (New York: Macmillan, 2007): 5.

¹⁵ Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

cliché' may hold some truth or otherwise. Nevertheless, they deeply influence our perception, behavior, and attitude toward a country or place.¹⁷ However, perception about a place or country results from complex variables.¹⁸ These variables might be the culmination of a country's pre-existing reputation, prevalent sociopolitical milieu, and, most importantly, how the foreign media projects a country's image.

As public opinion impacts a country's image, it directly influences its foreign relations, including exports, foreign direct investment, tourist inflow, education system, and, to a certain extent, political and economic ties.¹⁹ So far as a positive image is desired, transforming a country's image among the foreign public is a tricky proposition. Often countries face the dilemma of unintended responses to global political communication. A country may communicate a positive message as a dispatcher but cannot influence or change the way the recipient receives these notifications. A recipient is little affected by the message's source but mainly influenced by their perceptions, cognitive biases, and prejudices.²⁰ These sentiments are further insulated by religious connotation, ideology inclination, cultural affinity, and ethnicity. Therefore, governments have an enormous responsibility to be aware of their reputation and manage their positive image accordingly to achieve national and international goals.²¹

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND NATION BRANDING

The terms PD and nation branding are interchangeably used. While both perform similar functions of campaigning for a nation's global image, nation branding has become essential in the contemporary PD. Just like mediated public diplomacy, nation branding employs different tactic but for similar objective of positively framing a country's image. Leading

¹⁷ Simon Anholt, "Public Diplomacy and Competitive Identity: Where's the Link?" in Guy J. Golan, ed., *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015): 96.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Alexander Buhmann, "Measuring Country's Image a New Model," *CPD Blog, USC Center of Public Diplomacy*, September 16, 2016, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog>.

²⁰ Simon Anholt, "Nation Brand as Context and Reputation" *Place Branding*, 1:3 (July 2005): 224–225.

²¹ Simon Anholt, "Public Diplomacy and Competitive Identity: Where's the Link?" 97.

expert on nation branding, Gyorgy Szondi argues that both nation branding and PD represent state foreign policy interests; PD primarily serves the political interest of a country, while nation branding serves the economic interests. In this context, the former is identity-driven and the latter image driven. Further, PD aims to improve trust and build relationships, whereas branding creates a positive impression.²²

Guy Golan argues that nation branding can only achieve its purpose when a successful foreign policy exists. Golan points out that most image management approaches are unsuccessful because they are reactive rather than proactive. Image management has to be a contentious endeavor insulated by mediated public diplomacy, a comprehensive national media strategy based on integrated public diplomacy for the optimistic projection of the country's reputation.²³ Furthermore, Golan sees nation branding as a medium to long-term effort, which lays a solid foundation for relational diplomacy.²⁴ A successful national image-building strategy is unsuccessful without fulfilling the other two prerequisites: mediated and relational components of public diplomacy.²⁵

In this context, countries carrying some historical baggage of skepticism in bilateral relations struggle to maintain a positive image and cannot earn respect by taking reasonable actions. For instance, a sizable population in Pakistan was critical of the US humanitarian assistance during the 2005 earthquake operations in Northern areas of Pakistan. The US invasion of Afghanistan, military presence, and operation against al-Qaeda were key reasons behind adverse perception among the masses in Pakistan.²⁶ The US brand suffered for its unilateral actions in the Post-9/11 period, even among the allies. Millions gathered to protest against the Iraq War across Europe. A Pew Perception Survey, 2018 from 10 Western European NATO member nations shows that the US image

²² Gyorgy Szondi, "Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences" Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Discussion Paper in Diplomacy (October 2008): 17–18.

²³ Guy J. Golan, "An Integrated Approach to Public Diplomacy" 420.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 421.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Daniel Kronenfeld and Rhoda Margesson, "The Earthquake in South Asia: Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Operations" *CSR Report for Congress* (December 12, 2005): 20.

suffered a historical low among its allies.²⁷ Under the Biden administration, the rating slightly improved compared to recent years, with 59% of respondents from 23 countries giving the United States favorable ratings.²⁸

In a 2023 Pew Perception survey, many young respondents, ages 18–39, from countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Spain, and Germany consider the United States more dangerous than other similarly wealthy nations.²⁹ Many attribute the US image problem to post-Cold War unilateralism and global interventions without taking its key allies into confidence. The global perception persists that the US unilateralism is creating more issues globally than solving them. Whereas, in the Cold War, the US image had more positive global appeal for instance many trusted the American popular culture as one important instrumental in defeating the Soviet Union in global image perception.³⁰ In ideological warfare, the US's ability to spur pro-democracy forces in Eastern Europe was attributed to progressive values inherited in democracy and capitalism.

Countries with unfavorable media coverage often attract negative perceptions. Its hostile policy in Palestinian territories neutralizes Israel's democratic credentials in the Middle East. In the 2021 Gallup survey of Americans' perception of the Israel-Palestine conflict, young people and many lawmakers favored the Palestinian cause. Israel was seen losing the battle of perception among US citizens.³¹ Similarly, despite being

²⁷ Richard Wike and Bruce Stokes et al., "America's International Image Continues to Suffer" *Pew Research Survey Global Sttitude and Trends*, October 1, 2018.

²⁸ Richard Wike, Janell Fetterolf, Moira Fagan, Sarah Austin, and Jordan Lippert. "International Views of Biden and U.S. Largely Positive. Most Say U.S. Interferes in Affairs of Other Countries, But Also Contributes to Peace and Stability," Pew Research Center, June 27, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/06/27/international-views-of-biden-and-u-s-largely-positive/>.

²⁹ Elliott Davis Jr., "Biden Scores Higher Approval Abroad Than at Home. Majorities in All But One Country Included in a Recent Survey Have a Favorable Opinion of the United States, According to the Pew Research Center," *U.S. News*, June 27, 2023, 11:28 a.m. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2023-06-27/survey-finds-positive-international-opinion-of-the-u-s-biden>.

³⁰ Simon Anholt, "Public Diplomacy and Competitive Identity: Where's the Link?" 195.

³¹ Anchal Vohra, "Israel Losing US Perception Battle as Palestinian Sympathy Grows. Opinion of Legislators and the US Public Had Already Begun to Shift Before the 11-day

the largest democracy, sexual violence against women is a tough stain for India to wash.³² Despite effective global media presence, initiatives like 'Made in India' and spending more than \$240 million as of 2023 on initiatives like 'Swacch Bharat.'³³ India was unable to nullify the negative image attached to violence against women. Keeping this in view, one could argue that improvement in national image goes beyond merely public relations or advertisement campaigning. Experts on PD essentially believe that as actions speak louder than words, simply media campaigns and hiring international 'branding agencies' have often wasted tax money on expensive advertisement campaigning without improving the global image.³⁴ Countries need to reinvigorate their brand by bringing substantial changes in respective concerns so that branding can get effective outcomes.

CHINA AND NATION BRANDING

China, with strong Communist history, finds it hard to surmount the historical baggage of skepticism associated with its authoritarian state guided by an acute sense of nationalism. China for the last four decades has been striving to reinvent its national image while keeping the socialist values intact. China's global perception has been suffering from its track record on human right, unfair economic practices, and assertiveness in South China Sea. Many Western scholars have criticized China for trying to attain hegemony in the East Asian region.³⁵ Improving national image in international relations is a primary concern, especially for countries like China, under microscopic scrutiny by the global media and public.

Bombardment of Gaza," Al Jazeera, June 1, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/1/israel-losing-us-perception-battle-as-palestinians-sympathy-grows>.

³² Ibid.

³³ PBNS, "India Committed \$240 bn Investment in Water Sector, says Jal Shakti Minister," News On Air, March 24, 2023. <https://newsonair.com/2023/03/24/india-committed-240-bn-investment-in-water-sector-says-jal-shakti-minister/>.

³⁴ Simon Anholt, "Public Diplomacy and Competitive Identity: Where's the Link?" 196.

³⁵ Jianqing Wu, "An Empirical Study of Stereotyped Images of China in American Media" *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1:6 (November 2010): 913.

CHINESE DRIVE TO IMAGE IMPROVEMENT THROUGH NATION BRANDING

In the contemporary era, a positive national reputation is unquestionably an important instrument of power.³⁶ Nye says soft power is the ‘ability to get something you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment.’³⁷ Attraction represents the reputation that a nation accrues out of legitimacy gained through international public opinion.³⁸ Reputation is an essential aspect of a national brand that increases a country’s soft power. For China increase in brand value means an increase in soft power globally.³⁹ But for a country to convert these sources into power requires bringing global legitimacy for its political system, likability and attraction for its culture, and a foreign policy that complements norms of international society. Therefore, China’s soft diplomacy is inclined to demonstrate perception of a country vying for global integration, support of international law institutions and regimes, and technological drive⁴⁰ while addressing its domestic issues that concern global audience. China’s biggest challenge is to improve its global image, which characterizes the nation branding strategy of China. It wants to impress the world and seeks due respect and recognition as a responsible emerging power.⁴¹ China’s ability to address strategic security imperatives such as the threat of Taiwanese independence, settlement of South China Sea disputes to low political issues like drawing foreign direct investment, expansion of trade links, and achieving technological excellence are inextricably linked to national image.⁴²

³⁶ Jian Wang, “Managing National Reputation and International Relations in the Global Era: Public Diplomacy Revisited” *Public Relations Review*, 32 (2006): 92.

³⁷ Joseph Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 89.

³⁸ Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, “The Sources of American Legitimacy” *Foreign Affairs*, 83:6 (2004): 18.

³⁹ Abdulsamet Günek, “A New Type of Soft Power: Country Branding” *International Journal of Cultural and Social Studies*, 4:1 (June 2018): 253.

⁴⁰ Deborah Welch Larson, “Will China be a New Type of Great Power?” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 8:4 (2015): 340.

⁴¹ Joseph Baladi, “Brand China Reels from Lost Trust,” March 3, 2010, <https://nation-branding.info>.

⁴² Joshua Cooper Ramo, “Brand China” *Foreign Policy Center United Kingdom* (February 2007): 12.

Globally, China is recognized as a rising power with expansive geo-economic footprints and ambitions to become a superpower. Nevertheless, China has been displaying its projection as a rebirth developing, modern state aiming for a harmonious world order.⁴³ Scholars believe that China recreating its image should complement its cultural, demographic, economic, and psychological needs.⁴⁴ Due to the negative historical baggage of relations with the United States and the Europe, China needs more reputational capital within the Western public. Despite successful economic uplift and modernization, China struggled to overcome the perception deficit stigmatized by its image among the foreign public.⁴⁵ In this context, Chinese PD shows recognition and importance of 'Nation Branding' toward improving the national image. China has been creating ideas, icons, images, and brands based on what it inspires to be and what it aims to achieve. As a state with 5000 years of rich history, China is synchronizing its aspiration (Chinese Dream) with the glorious past, which provides a cultural heritage to modern China. Duan Liancheng noted that China's national image had been rebranded nine times (1) *Splendid China* by Marco Polo (2) *Enigmatic China* during Ming Dynasty (3) *Inferior China* during Opium Wars (4) *Promising China* standing against Japanese transgressions (5) *Resourceful* and *Blue Ant China*⁴⁶ marked the establishment of Peoples Republic of China (6) *Turbulent China* during the Cultural Revolution (7) *Shangri La China* pronounced by President Nixon (8) *Survivor China* marked era of opening up and (9) *China in a Great Experiment* also known as Rise of China.⁴⁷

China's national image is embedded in Chinese national power and political outlook during different eras of transformation. The political elite and the proponents of Peaceful Development argue that China is undergoing a period of Peaceful Development. Contemporary Chinese national image should be consistent with intrinsic values representing the Chinese

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁵ Xiufang (Leah) Li, "Images of China: A Comparative Framing Analysis of Australian Current Affairs Programming" *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 21:1 (2012): 180.

⁴⁶ At the time of the establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC), Chinese use to wear blue cloths due to fragile textile industry.

⁴⁷ Xiangfei Meng, *National Image: China's Communication of Cultural Symbols* (Singapore: Springer, 2020): 20.

state and society in line with the pursuit of ‘Peaceful Development.’ These aspirations entail a comprehensive view of areas of national power China could exploit to construct its brand for today and the future. Keeping this goal in sight, three pillars of China’s nation branding are Economic Development Model, Cultural Rejuvenation based on Soft Power, and the Chinese Developmental Model for developing countries. Though apparently, these pillars appeal more to the developing states in the global south, nevertheless, they have made a global impact on Chinese image. China has aggressively advertised these goals for two decades now.

a. Economic Development

China’s economic ascendancy has made a remarkable impression in the global public imagination. Today, China is the second wealthiest nation and is considered an orbit of global trade and investment and in the 1970s, reforms of Deng Xiaoping brought an economic renaissance in China. Deng bolstered diplomatic ties with the United States aiming toward opening to the outside world. Deng’s branding slogan, ‘to become rich is glorious,’ allowed China to embrace state capitalism. Rapid industrialization with huge social capital and manufacturing competency allowed state capitalism to establish China as a greater consumer branding focus.⁴⁸ Chinese political elite since then has been very attentive toward its global reputation. Chinese leaders have repeatedly underscored the importance of uplifting the national image of China.⁴⁹ ‘Made in China’ has become a global brand. China’s global public opinion has approved massive export surplus and international market access for the past two decades.⁵⁰

China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 opened new avenues of international economic relations. Fueled by FDI and rapid productivity growth, China’s GDP size has reached \$17.73 trillion in nominal terms as of 2022, which according to IMF, will

⁴⁸ John M. T. Balmer and Weifeng Chen, “China’s Brands, China’s Brand Development Strategies and Corporate Brand Communications in China” 178.

⁴⁹ Hongying Wang, “National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy” *China: An International Journal*, 1:1 (March 2003): 48.

⁵⁰ Simon Anholt, “Beyond the National Brand: the Role of Image and Identity in International Relations” 10.

surpass the \$26 trillion mark by 2027, and China's global manufacturing output accounts for 28.4% of the total global manufacturing output, which contributes to nearly \$4 trillion to the global economy.⁵¹ In 2014, IMF forecasted that China to surpass the United States in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) as the largest economy by 2018.⁵² According to the 2016 Competitive Index, China is ranked as the most competitive manufacturer in the world.⁵³ Since then, China's manufacturing sector has ranked first consistently for 13 years consecutively, as per recent data from China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.⁵⁴ Such high ranking resulted from investment in R&D on science and technology, research universities, and consistent foreign direct investments and focus on high-value manufacturing. China can receive billions in Foreign Direct Investment, attract inbound tourism, develop trade relations, and offer developmental assistance to recognize China's global image. The 2018 Brand Finance report measures China as the second most valuable brand with a net worth of \$12,779 billion, only second to the United States. The brand assessment is based on investment, society, and goods and services a country produces.⁵⁵ As per the 2021 Brand Finance Nations Brands 2021 report, China's brand value stands at \$19.9 trillion, while the United States has an estimated brand value of \$24.8 trillion.⁵⁶ These high standards of economic feats have developed China's image as the leader of the developing world. Notwithstanding this fact, economic prowess has given a developmental blueprint to the developing

⁵¹ "Unpacking China's GDP." ChinaPower, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Accessed on June 27, 2023. <https://chinapower.csis.org/tracker/china-gdp/>.

⁵² "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States" *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report* (June 25, 2019): 10.

⁵³ Deloitte, "2016 Global Manufacturing Competitiveness Index" 2016. <https://www2.deloitte.com>, accessed on January 5, 2020.

⁵⁴ Mo Hongge, "China's Manufacturing Sector Ranks World's First for 13 Consecutive Years," *Ecns.cn*, March 31, 2023. <http://www.ecns.cn/m/news/cns-wire/2023-03-31/detail-ihcmxstz1420622.shtml>.

⁵⁵ "National Brands: 2018" <https://brandfinance.com>, accessed on December 29, 2019.

⁵⁶ "World's Top Nation Brands on Road to Recovery with Global Brand Value up 7%." Brand Finance. 19 October 2021. <https://brandfinance.com/press-releases/worlds-top-nation-brands-on-road-to-recovery-with-global-brand-value-up-7>.

world to follow the so-called Chinese model.⁵⁷ More importantly, China's economic credentials are the core of its soft power and nation branding. As the second-largest economy, China's economic outlook has established a positive connection between its global image and business and trade. Hence, a promising economic outlook would be an essential source of Chinese nation branding for the coming decades.

b. Cultural Rejuvenation based on Soft Power

For China its image is not merely an external projection. Scholarship on soft power and PD has underlined the significance of cultural rejuvenation as a critical component of soft power, which has equally important domestic and international ramifications for Chinese national image.⁵⁸ China employs soft power as a top-down approach in conjunction with PD to show a positive image of China.⁵⁹ Though culture remains an integral feature of the Chinese soft power quest, scholars such as Yan Xuetong have called for good governance and investment in political capital to create a just society.⁶⁰ That is how China would conform to international norms while justifying its perception as a responsible player in international system. Chinese recognition of global concern for its rise warrants more efforts to promote a favorable global image. Alongside, China has been branding itself as a unified, self-assured, and progressive state under a strong national government.⁶¹

Culture is arguably the most significant aspect of 'Brand China' (品牌中國). For China, 'Brand China' is deeply embedded into its

⁵⁷ Hongyi Lai, "Introduction: The Soft Power Concept and a Rising China" in Hongyi Lai and Yiyi Lu, ed., *China's Soft Power and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 12.

⁵⁸ Hu Jintao, Report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 15, 2007, www.china.org.cn, accessed on December 30, 2019.

⁵⁹ "Is China's Soft Power Strategy Working?" interview with Joseph Nye, Liz Economy and David Shambaugh, <https://chinapower.csis.org>, accessed on December 31, 2019.

⁶⁰ Yan Xuetong, "The Core of Soft Power Is Political Power," *Global Times*, May 22, 2007.

⁶¹ Michael Barr, "Nation Branding as Nation Building: China's Image Campaign" *East Asia*, 29:83 (2012): 84.

rich culture and history.⁶² China glorifies its cultural past,⁶³ symbolizing contemporary China as the custodian of five thousand years of civilization. China holds 'the diverse cultures, histories, ethnicities, races and values embodied by other peoples,' essential in its rise to preeminence.⁶⁴ China's unique culture has a global appeal.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, China has been transforming the notion of 'Cultural Capital' (文化資本) into 'Economic Capital' (經濟資本).⁶⁶ On the occasion of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007, President Hu Jintao emphasized promoting culture as a part of a 'Soft Power' campaign to enhance the country's interests and fundamental rights of the people.⁶⁷ According to its proponents, cultural soft power is imperative for subsiding international concerns and articulating peaceful development internally and externally.⁶⁸ Traditionally, cultural imprints of China's nation branding had been its cuisines. However, with unprecedented economic growth and global outreach, China has diversified its cultural imprints. For instance, the Shanghai Olympics (2008), World Expo (2010), Film and Theater, and Confucius Institutes (CIs) have promoted Chinese culture globally.

For the last 15 years, China has developed a cultural industry with unique Chinese characteristics. Chinese cultural industry supports economic reforms and technological innovation and funds cultural programs to promote a modern national cultural industry.⁶⁹ Developing a cultural industry that would enshrine socialist culture, fulfill Chinese

⁶² Simon Anholt, "National Brand in the 21st Century" *The Journal of Brand Management*, 5:6 (1998): 404.

⁶³ Carolin Viktorin, et al., "Beyond Marketing and Diplomacy Exploring the Historical Origins of Nation Branding" in Carolin Viktorin, et al., ed., *Nation Branding in Modern History* (Brooklyn NY: Berghahn Publishing, 2018): 14.

⁶⁴ Ishita S. Roy, "Worlds Apart: Nation-Branding on the National Geographic Channel" *Media, Culture & Society*, 29:4 (2007): 576.

⁶⁵ Joshua Cooper Ramo, "Brand China" 16.

⁶⁶ Jing Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital" *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 9:1 (2001): 70.

⁶⁷ Hu Jintao, "Report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China" October 15, 2007, www.china.org.

⁶⁸ Z. Zhu and Z. Quan, *Chinese Communist Party and the Soft Power of the Chinese National's Renaissance* (Wuhan: Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, People's Press, 2009): 94-95.

⁶⁹ Haijun Yang, "Emergence and Development of China's Cultural Industry" in Chang Jiang, ed., *Development of China's Cultural Industry* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 15.

people's cultural needs, and address the requirements of the market economy and modernization drive were important goals of the 16th CPC National Congress.⁷⁰ The linkage between cultural soft power and economic openness has increased international trade for China. For Instance, Chinese trade in cultural goods such as visual arts and crafts, natural heritage, books, press, and performances and celebrations has seen a tremendous increase worldwide.⁷¹ From 2003 to 2013, the total volume of China's cultural goods critical raised 16.2% annually from \$6 billion to \$27.4 billion.⁷² In recent years, the total value of import and export of China's cultural goods has exceeded \$200 billion, which has boosted its soft power overseas.⁷³ As of 2021, China's cultural industry accounts for approximately 4.56% of its GDP.⁷⁴ China's cultural outreach and its contribution toward improving the economic health and national image make it an essential contributor to China's nation branding.

c. Chinese Developmental Model

Economic precedence provides countries with more freedom in the international system. China's economic development has been unprecedented, which brought around 700 million people out of poverty since the introduction of market reforms in the 1970s during the Deng Xiaoping era. On the path toward capitalist market reform, Chinese leaders carefully balanced attention to the socialist imperative of openness. Chinese course reconciled scientific socialism with a market economy toward a socialist development model. The notion of peaceful development is China's

⁷⁰ "Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress" November 18, 2002, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn>, accessed on January 5, 2020.

⁷¹ Yueling Xiao, "The Research on China Export Trade in Cultural Goods" *Advances in Computer Science Research*, 73 (2017): 824–825.

⁷² Hao Lu and Song Lanqi, "An Analysis of the Factors Influencing Chinese Cultural Product Export" *Studies in Sociology of Science* 7:4 (2016): 62; Haijun Yang "Development of Chinese Cultural Industry" 20.

⁷³ Orange Wang. "China May Increase Cultural Imports as Part of 28-point Plan to Boost Its Soft Power Overseas," *South China Morning Post*, 26 July 2022, 7:27 pm. <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3186654/china-may-increase-cultural-imports-part-28-point-plan-boost>.

⁷⁴ Wenyi Zhang, "GDP Share of Cultural Industry in China 2012–2021." Statista, March 5, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/555243/china-cultural-industry-share-of-gdp/>.

social, political, economic, cultural, and technological progress under the umbrella of Socialism with Chinese characteristics.⁷⁵ The 18th National Congress of the PRC proclaimed Chinese Development as the development of all countries. The Congress emphasized upholding the obligation of global governance and mutual development of neighboring and developing countries.⁷⁶ Addressing the United Nation's General Assembly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that 'China has blazed a new path to modernization for developing countries' and reiterated Chinese commitment toward the developing world by pointing out that 'as the largest developing country, China will always stand firmly with other developing countries to safeguard the common interests and right to development of developing countries and increase the representation and say of developing countries in global governance.'⁷⁷ Chinese development has caught the attention of the international community especially developing countries, many of which see China as a model of reform and economic restructuring.⁷⁸ As a developing country, China envisages a shared identity with the developing world. Regarding infrastructure development, industrial promotion, and extending foreign direct investment, China has been at the forefront in the developing world.

China's developmental aid footprints are also vivid across the developing world in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. According to the data compiled from 2000 to 2014, China has pledged \$350 billion to 140 countries in development aid.⁷⁹ A Report by Lowy Institute shows South East Asia receives around US\$28 billion of developmental finance from China annually.⁸⁰ China has become a significant investor in developmental projects and businesses globally, especially in the developing

⁷⁵ Yuyan Zhang and Weijiang Feng, *Peaceful Development Path in China* (Singapore: Springer, 2019): 6.

⁷⁶ "Hu Jintao's Report at 18th Party Congress" November 27, 2012, <http://www.china-embassy.org>, accessed on January 6, 2022.

⁷⁷ "Statement by Wang Yi at the United Nations General Assembly," September 28, 2019, <http://newyork.china-consulate.org>, accessed on February 7, 2020.

⁷⁸ Yuyan Zhang and Weijiang Feng, "Peaceful Development Path in China" 67.

⁷⁹ "China's Global Development Footprints" *Aiddata*, <https://www.aiddata.org/china-official-finance>, accessed on December 31, 2022.

⁸⁰ Alexandre Dayant, Grace Stanhope and Roland Rajah, "Filling the Gaps: The South-east Asia Aid Map", *the Interpreter*, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/filling-gaps-southeast-asia-aid-map>, accessed on July 14, 2023.

world.⁸¹ 2018 China's outbound investment was \$143.04 billion, making it the second-largest foreign investor covering 188 countries worldwide.⁸² China's annual FDI outflows have increased to \$146.5 billion as of 2022.⁸³ In 2014, China, Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa established a USD\$100 billion (BRICS) bank to provide development aid to developing countries. Another Chinese initiative was the USD\$100 billion Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB) to finance infrastructure projects in Asian countries.⁸⁴

Similarly, China has so far pledged USD\$1 trillion to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),⁸⁵ which includes the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor, the China-Central-Asia-West-Asia Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridors and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.⁸⁶ According to the Economist, China could invest up to USD\$4 trillion into the project.⁸⁷ Another estimate by the World Economic Forum forecasts USD\$8 trillion to be invested in the BRI initiative.⁸⁸ These initiatives would significantly improve China's global image and soft power.

⁸¹ Jian Wang, *Shaping China's Global Imagination Branding Nations at the World Expo* (New York: McMillian, 2013): 3.

⁸² "China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment" Ministry of Commerce Peoples Republic of China, September 13, 2019, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn>, accessed on December 31, 2019.

⁸³ C. Textor, "Annual FDI Outflows from China 2012–2022." Statista, July 13, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/858019/china-outward-foreign-direct-investment-flows/>.

⁸⁴ Martin A. Weiss, "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)" *Congressional Research Service* (February 3, 2017): 11.

⁸⁵ "How Will Belt and Road Initiative Advance China's Interests" China Power Project, <https://chinapower.csis.org>, accessed on December 31, 2019.

⁸⁶ "The Belt and Road Initiative Progress, Contributions and Prospects" Belt and Road Portal, <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/index.htm>, accessed on January 1, 2019.

⁸⁷ "Our Bulldozers, Our Rules, China's Foreign Policy Could Reshape a Good Part of The World Economy" *The Economist*, July 2, 2016.

⁸⁸ World Economic Forum, "China's \$900 Billion New Silk Road. What You Need to Know" June 26, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org>, accessed on January 6, 2020.

CHINA'S ADVERTISEMENTS CAMPAIGNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Chinese President Hu Jintao visited the United States for the summit with President Barak Obama in 2011 on a four days state visit from January 18–21.⁸⁹ A day before President Hu Jintao's visit, on January 17, six giant electronic screens appeared in Times Square, New York, titled 'Experience China' featuring images of ordinary to famous Chinese citizens.⁹⁰ This advertisement was featured 300 times daily for 8400 times from January 17 to February 13.⁹¹ The response by the US public was mixed, with some viewing the celebrating tone as China's economic, military, and political rise. At the same time, others saw China depicting its culture and value to the American audience. Nevertheless, it was a matter of prestige and expression of glorious Chinese outreach for the Chinese audience. The place of advertisement was necessary as the Chinese view Time Square as the center stage of America, which could communicate an essential message for China's image campaign in the United States.⁹²

Advertisement in the form of storytelling is a compelling way of engaging the live audience and improving the national image. New York advertisement reflected wealth, culture, extraordinary Chinese citizens, scientific innovation, and growing Chinese scholarship to the American public.⁹³ Arguably, even one advertisement of such magnitude could not alter the perception of the targeted audience; nevertheless, such advertisement is part of a comprehensive campaign of China's nation branding, which includes mediated media resources, a 'Made in China' campaign, trade relations and the burgeoning growth of Confucius Institutes in the United States.⁹⁴ China aims to rectify the perception among the US

⁸⁹ "President Hu Jintao to Pay a State Visit to U.S." January 7, 2011. <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn>, accessed on January 9, 2019.

⁹⁰ Loretta Chao, "Pro-China Ad Debuts in Times Square" *The Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2011.

⁹¹ "Pro-China Ad Makes Broadway Debut," *Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2011.

⁹² Zhengrong Hu and Deqiang Ji, "Ambiguities in Communicating with the World: The 'Going-out' Policy of China's Media and Its Multilayered Contexts" *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 5:1 (March 2012): 33.

⁹³ Keith Dinnie, *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice* (New York: Rutledge, 2016): 81.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

public opinion about its culture, China–US relations, and world view.⁹⁵ The idea is to present a brand-new image of China to the American public. China knows that public opinion could largely influence the US foreign policy. To this end, Chinese endeavors are directed to boost a friendly, trustworthy, and reliable image in the US public opinion.

Adopting a coherent PD strategy in 2003, gave China a new vigor in its nation branding campaign. Branding China is an integral feature of China's PD strategy to convert China's image from a threat into a peaceful nation. The Bao Forum⁹⁶ and the formation of the State Council of Information Office⁹⁷ were instrumental in conceptualizing the Chinese 'Peaceful Development' and 'Harmonious World' drive and connecting with the global public.⁹⁸ Regarding image projection, China's primary concern is its relationship with the United States. Economic and technological competition, contentious geostrategic issues in East Asia, and cyber security are some of the problems that have gained negative media attention. As a result, these issues can seriously hamper the positive Chinese image among the US public.

Negative projection of China in the US media has been one big impediment to improving China's global brand. In 2008, China's National Index slid 23 points to 47th from 24th place in 2005. Consequently, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce commissioned the advertisement campaign 'Made in China, Made with the World' through a US-based ad agency DDB Guoan. The advertisement focused on five products, 'Made in China,' using global technologies from leading Western nations.⁹⁹ This advertisement showed China as a partner in the global producer of commodities daily used by people across the globe. Made-in-China advertisement engaged viewers to reflect on products made in China. Another advertisement, 'Experience China,' was an emotional appeal to think about the humane side of China by showing Chinese personalities

⁹⁵ Ji Pan, "Compare Chinese with Americans: How Trait Comparisons Shape Public Perception of Sino-US Relationship and China Policy Issues" *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 9:2 (2016): 73.

⁹⁶ Zheng Bijian, "China's Peaceful Rise to Big Power Status" *Foreign Affairs*, 84:5 (September/October 2005): 18–24.

⁹⁷ "The State Council, the People's Republic of China" <http://english.www.gov.cn>, accessed on January 12, 2019.

⁹⁸ Arda Can Çelik, *China's Projected Image—A Structured, Focused Comparison in the United State of America* (Norderstedt: Grin Verlag, 2011): 12.

⁹⁹ Kineta Hung, "Repairing the "Made-in-China" Image in the U.S. and U.K.: Effects of Government Supported Advertising" 210.

well recognized in the United States.¹⁰⁰ These advertisement campaigns targeted the American audience, which had less faith in Made-in-China products. New communication and labeling strategies were developed to support Made-in-China products such as ‘Designed by Apple in California; Assembled in China’ (Apple).¹⁰¹ This strategy aimed to neutralize negative stereotypes about Made in China while improving the scope of Chinese exports. A study through an online survey conducted by David K. Tse and Kineta Hung noted that these advertisements positively affected consumer behavior in the United States and people had stronger intent to buy Made-in-China products. Content analysis in one of the leading newspapers *New York Times*, showed that the ‘Made in China’ advertisement had a very impact on all ‘Made in China’ related news. Public surveys showed that from 2010 onward that public perception of China considerably improved in the United States.¹⁰² Over the period, indigenous Chinese brands have gained recognition and consumer approval in the United States. Top Chinese brands include Huawei Technologies, Lenovo, ZTE, Haier, and One Plus, now well-known and accepted brands in the US market. Some of China’s leading social media applications, E-commerce, and internet providers have made considerable impression in the United States. Alibaba, WeChat, TikTok, and Zoom have significant consumer approval, especially among the younger population in the United States. The US imports from China reflect the confidence made in China and China products. American consumers consume Made-in-China products, including electric blankets, videogame consoles, electrical appliances, toys, furniture, and plastics.¹⁰³ The strain in the US–China trade relations has not mainly affected the imports of consumer products from China by the United States.

¹⁰⁰ David K. Tse and Kineta Hung, *Dynamic Growth of Chinese Firms in the Global Market: Challenges, Strategies and Implications* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020): 158.

¹⁰¹ Xiangfei Meng, *National Image: China’s Communication of Cultural Symbols* (Singapore: Springer, 2020): 25.

¹⁰² David K. Tse and Kineta Hung, *Dynamic Growth of Chinese Firms in the Global Market: Challenges, Strategies and Implications*, 29.

¹⁰³ “US-China Trade Facts 2019”, *Office of the United States Trade Representative*, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/china-mongolia-taiwan/peoples-republic-china>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

Outbound Activities

a. Culture

Though culture resonates with relational public diplomacy, it has a massive appeal in cultivating a positive image. Cultural activities form an essential feature of China's nation branding. Language training and cultural exhibitions are central to showcasing the cultural side of 'Brand China.' Proponents of Chinese soft power see Cultural/Confucius Institutes (CIs) as an important source of learning about China for the public in the United States, especially when Sino-US geostrategic competition is on the rise.¹⁰⁴ Amid specific concerns about the working and mandate of CIs in the United States, Chinese language training and cultural activities continue to attract American student enrollment and diverse public attention.¹⁰⁵ Since 1972, Chinese Panda has promoted a positive image of China in the United States. Pandas have been part of Chinese diplomacy for centuries, but it came into the limelight when a pair of pandas was gifted to President Nixon and his wife as a gift from Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. The gesture ensued Panda-Monium¹⁰⁶ with high demand for Panda across the US zoos.¹⁰⁷ The practice of presenting Pandas is seen as a gesture of friendship and seen as an ambassador in the host country—pandas as a brand feature in entertainment, apparel, and sports companies as part of nation branding.

b. Heritage

The rich archeological history depicts 5000 years of Chinese civilization. From Great Wall to Turpan and Terracotta Warriors in Xian province

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer Hubbert, *An Anthropology of Confucius Institutes: Soft Power and Globalization* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press: 2019): 114.

¹⁰⁵ Xin Liu, "China's Cultural Diplomacy: A Great Leap Outward with Chinese Characteristics? Multiple Comparative Case Studies of the Confucius Institutes" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28: 118 (2019): 647.

¹⁰⁶ Panda-Monium is a mystery novel by Stuart Gibbs which describes the arrival of a rare and expensive Giant Panda Li Ping at FunJungle. But as the truck transporting the Li Ping arrives the residents of FunJungle found that the cargo has been vanished during the transportation.

¹⁰⁷ Brynn Holland, "Panda Diplomacy: The World Cutest Ambassador" *History Channel* August 22, 2018, <https://www.history.com>, accessed on March 22, 2020.

attract millions of visitors annually.¹⁰⁸ These places are tourist hotspots and attract million each year. China's nation branding expedition led to the conversion of archeology as a soft power resource. In 2008, Terra-cotta Warriors were sent on a two-year tour of selected museums in the United States.¹⁰⁹ In each subsequent year, demand to see these historical warriors increased, leading to annual tours across US cities. Chinese American museums in major cities in the United States showcasing artifacts, paintings, and exhibitions are relational aspects of China's nation branding campaign.

c. Cuisine

Chinese cuisine indicates the large Chinese American diaspora in the United States and their cultural imprints from the East to the West Coast. Chinese restaurants named 'Confucius' would appear in states across New York and Los Angeles. Famous Chinese cuisine such as Peking duck, dumplings, noodles, and egg fried rice are staple food from vendors and posh restaurants in the United States. These restaurants not only serve Chinese cuisine but also entice guests with the famous sayings of Confucius (who had an acute understanding of food and eating), 'everyone eats and drinks, but few appreciate the taste' as part of their brand reputation. For instance, Chinese restaurants in the United States would coin Confucius maxims, and install Confucius characters and décor accordingly.¹¹⁰ There are around 45,000 Chinese restaurants in the United States¹¹¹ compared to 13,515 McDonalds, which shows multi-diversity opportunities regarding cuisine in China's nation branding sphere in the United

¹⁰⁸ "Is China Attracting Foreign Visitors", *China Power*, <https://chinapower.csis.org/tourism/#toc-2>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ "California Museum Hosts Terracotta Warriors," *NBC News*, May 16, 2008.

¹¹⁰ Zang Tao, "Confucius: Cultural Icon of Chinese Cuisine in Post-Second World War America" in Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Going Soft: The US and China Goes Global* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014): 201.

¹¹¹ Zhaoyin Feng, "What Did I Learned Eating at 8,000 Chinese Restaurants" *BBC News*, 24 November 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-59356176>, accessed on July 18, 2023.

States.¹¹² According to Pew Research Center, Chinese restaurants can be found in every US State and 70% of all US counties.¹¹³

d. Movies and Entertainment

Another area of Brand China is the acquisitions and projections in the entertainment industry, especially Hollywood. The Chinese government has been vocal about using film to promote Chinese soft power. President Xi Jinping's version of the Chinese Dream aims to express China through global media dominance.¹¹⁴ President of the China Film Co-Production Corporation, Zhang Xun, in 2013, addressed the Hollywood film executive who said that China wants to show a positive image through Hollywood movies underscoring the importance of the US market for Chinese film.¹¹⁵ The collaboration between Hollywood and local Chinese production allows Hollywood conglomerates to build their brand in China. Meanwhile, the Chinese government takes it as an opportunity to overcome the 'cultural trade deficit.'¹¹⁶ China expert David Shambaugh, Chinese state media production has initiated a Sino-Western 'Discourse War.' Both sides are pursuing the film medium to depict brand-building initiatives.¹¹⁷ While Sino-US relations are helping Hollywood expand in the Chinese market, it allows China to advance its soft power in the United States.¹¹⁸

¹¹² "Chinese Restaurants in the US Industry Statistics," *IBISWorld*, April 23, 2020, <https://www.ibisworld.com/united-states/market-research-reports/chinese-restaurants-industry/>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

¹¹³ Sono Shah and Regina Widjaya, "71% of Asian Restaurants in the U.S. Serve Chinese, Japanese or Thai Food," Pew Research Center, May 23, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/23/71-of-asian-restaurants-in-the-u-s-serve-chinese-japanese-or-thai-food/>.

¹¹⁴ Wang Zheng, "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 19:1 (2013).

¹¹⁵ Michael Cieply, "China Wants Its Movies to Be Big in the U.S., Too" *New York Times*, November 6, 2013.

¹¹⁶ Paul Schwartzman, "Interview with Aynne Kokas, July 30, 2009, Shanghai, China" in Aynne Kokas, *Hollywood Made in China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 3.

¹¹⁷ David Shambaugh, "China's Soft-Power Push" *Foreign Affairs*, 94:4 (2015): 103.

¹¹⁸ Aynne Kokas, *Hollywood Made in China*, 3.

The history of Sino-US coventures in Hollywood dates back to 1981 and in 1998, the Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia established the first studio in Hong Kong. Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia produced Chinese films to attract domestic Chinese audiences and the Chinese diaspora worldwide.¹¹⁹ ‘Columbia Asia coproduced *The Road Home* (wo de fuqin muqin, 1999) with Beijing New Pictures and Guangxi Film Studio, and co-financed and coproduced *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000) with Huayi Brothers and Taihe Film Investment Co., as well as with the United Kingdom’s United China Vision.’¹²⁰ The induction of Chinese actors in Hollywood movies is also part of a strategy to attract and please the Chinese audience.

The Hollywood movie ‘2012’ showed Noha’s Ark built in Himalayan Chinese Tibet and the compassionate Chinese soldiers and monks depicting China as a last hope for humanity. The movie did USD\$770 million business worldwide and was among many projects showing China’s growing influence in Hollywood.¹²¹ Whereas the 2016 high-budget Hollywood-Chinese coproduction movie ‘Great Wall’ did not go well at the box office, the movie had the highest Chinese cast in a Hollywood movie. It showcased the Chinese culture to the American audience.

American movie companies are attracted to the lucrative Chinese consumer market to increase profitability. From 1997 to 2013, China only sponsored 12 Hollywood movies with higher earnings; however, in five years, from 2014–2018, China sponsored 41 of the top-earning Hollywood movies. China has also become the largest Box Office for Hollywood movies surpassing the United States for the first time in 2018.¹²² Hollywood has been ‘partnering on investment with key Chinese entities, such as the CFG (*Fast and Furious 7*), Wanda (*Southpaw*) and

¹¹⁹ Weiying Peng, “Sino-US Film Coproduction: A Global Media Primer,” *Global Media and China*, 1:4 (2017): 298.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “Zhang Zhexin, Farewell, 2012! The Declining Chinese Image and its Impact on US-China Issues During the 2012 US Presidential Campaign” in Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Going Soft: The US and China Goes Global* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014): 528.

¹²² Amy Qin and Audrey Carlsen, “Rewriting Its Own Script,” *New York Times*, November 18, 2018.

Alibaba (Mission Impossible sequel).’ The China-Hollywood collaboration toward movies produced in China is another step toward increasing cooperation in the entertainment industry.¹²³

Hollywood has received significant investments from Chinese investors.¹²⁴ Hollywood blockbuster *Transformers: Age of Extinction* was produced and promoted by Paramount in collaboration with China Movie Channel and its online subsidiary MI905.com.¹²⁵ As a result of these China-Hollywood collaborations, the American people are more interested to know about China. Leading US trade writers like Hollywood Reporter Clifford Coonan and Variety’s Patrick Frater has repeatedly pointed out how the global media industry has benefited from the China-US media co-ventures.¹²⁶ Political figures like Senator Christopher Dodd, the former chairman and chief executive officer of the Motion Picture Association of America, acknowledged the Chinese market’s importance for Hollywood to attract the most significant global audience.¹²⁷

In the high tide of China-US tension China’s collaboration with Hollywood is seen as an opportunity that the contemporary media exhibits toward an avenue of cooperation. Hollywood, made in and with China, shows interest in global media brands toward the opportunity to globalize the Chinese media and entertainment industry.

¹²³ Weiyang Peng, “Sino-US Media Coproduction: A Global Media Premier,” *Global Media and China*, 1:4 (2016): 296.

¹²⁴ Aynne Kokas, *Hollywood made in China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 4.

¹²⁵ Clifford Coonan, “China Box Office: ‘Transformers: Age of Extinction’ Is No. 1 Film of All Time” *The Hollywood Reporter*, July 7, 2014, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/transformers-age-extinction-becomes-chinas-717083>, accessed on December 14, 2020.

¹²⁶ Clifford Coonan, “Can China Expand Its Beachhead in Hollywood?” *China File*, February 23, 2017, <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/can-china-expand-its-beachhead-hollywood>, accessed on December 15, 2020.

¹²⁷ Christopher Dodd, “Big Screen, Big Markets: U.S.-China Relations in the Film Business,” Keynote Speech at the Beijing International Film Festival, Beijing, April 17, 2014, www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Sino-Foreign-Co-Production-Forum-Remarks-As-Prepared-for-Delivery.pdf, accessed on December 15, 2020.

c. E-gaming

The Chinese gaming industry is booming globally, as Chinese developers are growing their games by producing high-production value games that give the consumer an engaging experience.¹²⁸ According to Statista's market insight report on digital media, the Chinese mobile gaming industry in the United States alone has contributed 20% to the total mobile gaming revenues projected to reach \$109.20 billion in 2023. This revenue is expected to grow annually at the rate of 8.04% till 2027, reaching an approximate market volume of \$148.80 billion by 2027. The United States contributes as the largest and the most mature imports market of Chinese video gaming.¹²⁹ Around 43,474 shipments of videogames were made to the United States from China, the largest from any country.¹³⁰ Many of these games are fully developed, designed, and produced in China, while others are a collaborative product of both US and Chinese developers. In 2021, Chinese games claimed 21 of the 100 top-grossing games in the United States.¹³¹ In July 2022, Sensor Tower, a mobile app research firm, reported that 23 Chinese mobile games were featured in the top 100 bestsellers in the United States during the year's first leg.¹³² *Genshin Impact*, developed by *miHoYo*, a Chinese game company, topped the charts in the United States in 2022 with a revenue of \$140 million. The following three spots were also taken by Chinese mobile games *State of Survival*, *Call of Duty Mobile*, and *Rise of Kingdoms*, respectively.¹³³ Some of the most popular Chinese video

¹²⁸ Khee Hoon Chan, "The Rise of Prestige Chinese Games," *Polygon*, February 19, 2022. <https://www.polygon.com/22893265/china-aaa-indie-video-games-genshin-impact-dyson-sphere-program>.

¹²⁹ Digital Market Outlook: Video Games in China, *Statista*, accessed July 31, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/digital-media/video-games/china>.

¹³⁰ "Video Games Exports from World to United States," *Volza*, June 9, 2023, <https://www.volza.com/p/video-game/export/cod-united-states/>, accessed on July 30, 2023.

¹³¹ Rita Liao, "Chinese Mobile Games Are Gaining Ground in the US," *Tech Crunch*, February 24, 2021. <https://techcrunch.com/2021/02/24/chinese-games-us-boom/>.

¹³² Ting Qian, "2022 H1 U.S. Mobile Game Market Insights—Players Paid \$11.4 Billion, and Puzzle, Chess, and Strategy Games Had the Highest Revenue," *Sensor Tower*, July 28, 2022. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YD29queDR7MvYmrsKzVxRw>.

¹³³ "23 Chinese Mobile Games Among US Top 100 Bestsellers in H1 2022." *Pandaily*, July 28, 2022. <https://pandaily.com/23-chinese-mobile-games-among-us-top-100-bestsellers-in-h1-2022/>.

games played in the United States include Genshin Impact, Conqueror's Blade, Naraka: Bladepoint, Lost Soul Aside, Bright Memory: Infinite, and Black Myth: Wukong. Likewise, Chinese mobile games played in the United States include Call of Duty Mobile, Rise of Kingdoms, State of Survival, PUBG Mobile, Honor of Kings, Onmyoji, Fantasy Westward Journey, QQ Speed, CrossFire, and Clash of Clans.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, gaming has become even more popular. It has already been a huge industry, earning almost more than the global film and American sports industries combined. The Chinese gaming industry is rising globally. *Genshin Impact* has been so successful globally that it was listed as the 'most discussed game' throughout 2022, with more than 12,571 tweets and nearly 4 million retweets, as reported by *Fancensus*.¹³⁴ Such global impact of the Chinese gaming industry and its consumer market has attracted many trade associations and government agencies, especially those in the United States, to connect with Chinese gaming companies to collaborate with Western game studios, publishers, and rights holders.¹³⁵ The Chinese gaming industry was least affected by Covid and exhibited positive growth then.¹³⁶ In the United States, Chinese gaming companies, like *Tencent Holding Limited*, the publishing and distributing gaming company for the famous PUBG, have invested in US gaming companies like Riot Games and Epic Games.¹³⁷ Such collaboration and investment in the US gaming industry by the Chinese gaming

¹³⁴ Ann Cao, "Genshin Impact Bags US\$4 Billion in Sign of Rising Power of China's Video Gaming Industry," *South China Morning Post*, January 4, 2023. <https://www.scmp.com/tech/big-tech/article/3205443/genshin-impact-bags-us4-billion-sign-rising-power-chinas-video-gaming-industry>.

¹³⁵ Robin Sloan, Martin Lynagh, Hailey Austin, and Hayley Brown, "Transnational Development Cultures: Navigating Production, Market, and Cultural Difference Within European-Chinese Game Development Teams," *Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games (FDG '22)*. Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 16, 2022: 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3555858.3555862>.

¹³⁶ Yi-Qian Han, Wonjun Jeong, Gi-Sung Oh, Seok Hee Oh and Taeg Keun Whangbo, "Using LDA Topic Modeling to Understand Regrowth Factors of the Chinese Gaming Industry in the COVID-19 Era: Current Situation, Future and Predicament," *Journal of Web Engineering* 22 (2023): 433–464. <https://doi.org/10.13052/jwe1540-9589.2233>.

¹³⁷ Eszter Lukács, Katalin Völgyi, Norbert Kovács, and Árpád Tóth. "American Versus Domestic Digital Companies in the Chinese Market" *Decision Making: Applications in Management and Engineering*, 5:2 (2022): 120–139. <https://doi.org/10.31181/dma-me0305102022v>.

industry have gained significant dominance within the US gaming landscape through many popular games, such as *PUBG (Windows)*, *PUBG mobile*, *Call of Duty*, *Rise of Kingdoms*, *State of Survival*, *Honor of Kings*, and many more.

China continues to be the most significant player in the global gaming landscape—in PC games, consoles, and mobile games—with over ‘31.7% of global mobile games revenue and 33.4% of global PC games revenue.’¹³⁸ The Chinese gaming industry and its investment in the US gaming landscape have globalized it to a level where other gaming industries may not compete with the enormous investments made by Chinese companies.¹³⁹ In 2022, American players made up 17.12% of the total player count in *PUBG*.¹⁴⁰ When comparing two *Battle Royale* game giants, *PUBG* (Chinese) and *Fortnite* (US), the Chinese game averages over 500 million active players globally, while *Fortnite*—developed by US-based gaming firm Epic Games—averages 270 million users globally.¹⁴¹ Chinese mobile games dominate the global gaming landscape and are the most famous in United States, Asia, and Europe. As of 2023, Chinese mobile gaming companies contribute 47% of the total global mobile gaming revenue, almost half of the total global mobile gaming revenue.¹⁴²

f. Sister Cities

Sister city diplomacy as part of place branding is another facet of China–US diplomatic relations. City diplomacy is an important area where China

¹³⁸ Marie Dealessandri, “China’s Games Market Reached \$45.5bn in 2022,” *GamesIndustry.biz*, June 7, 2023. <https://www.gamesindustry.biz/chinas-games-market-reached-455bn-in-2022>.

¹³⁹ Brandon Zheng, “China and the Globalization of the Gaming Industry,” *Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy*. June 21, 2022. <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/china-and-globalization-gaming-industry>.

¹⁴⁰ Marina Stanisheva, and Denitsa Pilikova. “PUBG Player Count: How Many People Are Playing the Famous Battle Royale in 2023?” Web Tribunal, March 6, 2023. <https://webtribunal.net/blog/pubg-player-count/>.

¹⁴¹ Philip Caron, “Fortnite vs PUBG: Which One Is The Definitive Battle Royale Game?” WB Teck. Last modified May 24, 2023. <https://wbteck.com/fortnite-vs-pubg/>.

¹⁴² Anne Freer, “Chinese Game Companies Contributing 47% of Mobile Gaming Revenues,” *Business of Apps*, June 9, 2023. <https://www.businessofapps.com/news/chinese-game-companies-contributing-47-of-mobile-gaming-revenues/>.

marks enormous potential to improve its brand China in the United States. Ohio (US) became the first pair state with the Chinese province of Hubei in 1979. Since then, China and the United States have had 277 pair of cities, ports, schools, and monuments.¹⁴³ A 2014 US-China Sister City conference in Washington DC. They attracted the public and city representatives from both countries.¹⁴⁴ Sister cities aim to develop meaningful linkages and avenues for learning through sharing experiences. Intercity linkages have fostered subnational community-based online and offline connections, an important way of people-to-people diplomacy. In both countries, such connectivity rectifies misperceptions and address extreme view through cross-cultural learning. Alongside sister cities is an excellent way to strengthen citizen diplomacy. China's rapid economic development and liberalization have provided more excellent avenues like sub-state business connections, job creation, educational exchanges, rural areas reforms, and intellectual capital exchange.

Inbound Activities

a. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Trade

Inbound impact of nation branding is equally important with the outbound impact. Foreign Direct Investment, tourist attraction Expos, and mega sports events could determine the competitiveness of a nation's brand.¹⁴⁵ In 2018, the US Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in China was US\$116 billion.¹⁴⁶ Chinese FDI in the United States stock was \$39.5 billion in 2017. Since 2017, however, the outbound investment from China to the United States has sharply declined. American Enterprise Institute noted that from 2018 onward, the United States still needs to receive Chinese investment even when Chinese investment has registered an upward trend in 2023. For instance, till March 2023, only the logistics,

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Backgrounder: China-U.S. Sister City Ties" *Xinhua News*, March 3, 2019.

¹⁴⁵ George V. Avlonitis, "The Linkage Between Nation Branding and Nation Competitiveness" January 15, 2018, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk>, accessed on January 13, 2020.

¹⁴⁶ "U.S.-China Investment Ties: Overview and Issues for Congress" *Congressional Research Services*, August 28, 2019.

energy, and health sectors received around USD\$360 million in investment from China.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand in July 2023, US Senate has passed new bill titled 'The Casey-Cornyn Outbound Investment Transparency Act' to impose new restrictions on outbound investments from China in semiconductors, quantum computing, and artificial technologies.¹⁴⁸ Even amid the trade war with China, Sino-US trade stood at over \$500 billion in 2019,¹⁴⁹ and further recorded an upward trend of USD\$536.8 billion in 2022 to set a new record.¹⁵⁰ It shows the complexity of global interdependence and avenue of cooperation in the most testing times in Sino-US relations.

b. Chinese tourists in the United States

The Covid pandemic slowed global mobility in 2019, and China imposed restrictions for inward traveling in March 2020. Before that, in 2019, more than 2.5 million American tourists traveled to China, a huge surge compared to 1997, when only 600,000 tourists traveled to the mainland, excluding Hong Kong and Macau territories.¹⁵¹ While the United States received 540,000 Chinese tourists between May 2022 and April 2023, the American travel advisory for China, Hong Kong, and Macao is preventing most American tourists from visiting China.

¹⁴⁷ Derek Scissors, "Chinese Global Investment Tracker", *American Enterprise Institute*, July 24, 2023, <https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/>, accessed on July 28, 2023.

¹⁴⁸ "Creasy, Cornyn Bill to Screen Outbound Investment in China Overwhelmingly Passed Senate", July 25, 2025, <https://www.casey.senate.gov/news/releases/casey-cornyn-bill-to-screen-us-investment-in-china-overwhelmingly-passes-senae>, accessed on July 29, 2023.

¹⁴⁹ "Trade in Good with China", United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html>, accessed on January 13, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ "International Trade in Goods and Services," *Bureau of Economic Analysis*, July 26, 2023, <https://www.bea.gov/data/intl-trade-investment/international-trade-goods-and-services>, accessed on July 28, 2023.

¹⁵¹ "Is China Attracting Foreign Visitors" China Power Project, <https://chinapower.csis.org>, accessed on February 10, 2020.

c. Shanghai Expo

International exhibitions have become a leading source of optimistic projection. The Shanghai Expo 2010 attracted 70 million people and brought global attention to China's growing feat in modernization, technology, and innovation.¹⁵² Expo of this magnitude depicts the promotion of the national image and the trajectory of the technological trends in China. David Madden has pointed out that 'China' has connected modernization themes with the harmonious development of progressive humanity and depicts Shanghai as a future model urban center.¹⁵³ Shanghai Expo helped to broaden the discussion from the singular focus of China's rise to a country aiming for global integration through modernization and the 'intersection of cultural diversity and innovation.'¹⁵⁴ Pavilions of advanced states at the Expo showed the willingness of the world to engage with contemporary China.¹⁵⁵ For instance, a study conducted on national branding communication goals by Jian Wang on country pavilions at the Shanghai Expo showed that their country's presence served different motives. Interview conducted with the US pavilion at the Expo 'reinforcing positive image' and presents the United States as a 'place of opportunity, diversity and community building.'¹⁵⁶ World Fairs like Shanghai Expo reinforce the element of reciprocity, which serves as a

¹⁵² Ke Xue, et al., "Can the World Expo Change a City's Image Through Foreign Media Reports?" *Public Relations Review*, 38:5 (2012): 749.

¹⁵³ David J. Madden, "City Becoming World: Nancy, Lefebvre, and the Global-Urban Imagination" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30 (2012): 13.

¹⁵⁴ "Points of View: Nation Branding at World Expos Interview with Nicolas Bideau, Dietmar Schmitz and Jay Wang," *Bureau International Des Expositions*, September 2018, <https://www.bie-paris.org>, accessed on January 13, 2020; Silvio Carta, "The Image of the Shanghai 2010 Expo the Contribution of Single Pavilions to Shanghai's Global Image" *Frontiers of Architectural Research* (2013).

¹⁵⁵ Jian Wang and Shaojing Sun, *Experiencing Nation Brands: A Comparative Analysis of Eight National Pavilions at Expo Shanghai 2010* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2012): 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

short-term but practical perspective of engaging with visitors in a promotional capacity. And a long-term view of creating a nation-brand story, representing society's larger image.

d. US student in Chinese Education Institutions

Education is another factor that improves the global perception of a country. Massive investment in education as a component of human development has enhanced China's educational outlook. From 2011–2018 China spent USD\$520 billion on the education budget.¹⁵⁷ From January 2007 to May 2023, China's spending on education has been estimated to be USD\$45 billion annually.¹⁵⁸ Leading Chinese higher education institutions have attracted millions of international students, including students from the United States. Compared to the United States or Britain regarding education destinations for overseas students, China still has to go a long way. Nevertheless, China now has at least six universities among the top 100 universities in the world. The number of international students in China has grown exponentially in recent years. In 2018, among 500,000 international students studying in China, around 21,000 students were from the United States. Around 12,000 are studying in Chinese universities in 2023 despite the stress in US–China relations.¹⁵⁹ The number of American students in China is attributed to the prevalence of English medium education and the improvement of the brand of China as a preferable destination for American students.

China is projected to take over the United States as the world's largest economy in GDP by 2030.¹⁶⁰ China's way to the top requires building 'Brand China,' a reliable brand to provide global leadership and public

¹⁵⁷ "China's Govt Spending on Education Above 4 pct of GDP for 7 Consecutive Years" *Xinhua News*, October 17, 2019.

¹⁵⁸ "China Government Expenditure: Education 2007–2023 | Monthly | RMB BN | Ministry of Finance." CEIC Data. <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/china/government-revenue-and-expenditure-monthly/government-expenditure-education>.

¹⁵⁹ Kiran Agarwal, "U.S. Students in China: Meeting the Goal of 100,000 Strong Initiative," *Center of Institute of International Education* (January 2013): 13.

¹⁶⁰ "China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative High-Income Society" *The World Bank*, <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/China-2030-overview.pdf>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

goods. But the perception of any nation is subjective to the image cultivated through different lenses, which can change over time. China had a considerable global image deficit during the Tiananmen massacres (1989) and SARS Flu but considerably improved during the Beijing Olympics and Shanghai Expo; for countries like China, image and perceptions are linked to political goals and socioeconomic outlook. For instance, fluctuation in the US public opinion on China is primarily influenced by media projections based on economic, political, and geostrategic concerns. Mass media, including broadcast and social media, provides an instant and inexpensive way to project leaders and countries in today's time. A strategic use of nation branding through targeted communication could serve China's soft power objective and transform China into a super brand. Mega events such as Olympic and Bao Forum added value to China's brand cultivation efforts. However, branding is an immediate-to-long-term effort that requires sustainable investment. Branding thus requires a diversified approach that incorporates social media, diaspora, consumer goods, education, tourism, and word of mouth to devise a comprehensive strategy.

On the manufacturing side, China has recreated its image from a depressed agrarian state to a world factory of commodities. On the economic side, China has rebranded itself as the economic powerhouse only second to the United States regarding GDP, whereas it is number one in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).¹⁶¹ In cultural retrospect, China carries the civilizational capital of a 5000-year-old civilization with a rich cultural heritage. China has illustrated its development initiative through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to frame the global leadership role.

CONCLUSION

Nation branding has become a vital political and cultural resource for building a national image. China sees nation branding as an essential instrument to improve the nation's appearance. China's brand has been gaining acceptance in the non-western world; however, China's biggest challenge today is getting the American public's approval. Chinese publicity campaigns, advertisements, and other branding activities in the

¹⁶¹ "World Development Indicators Database: GDP, PPP", *The World Bank*, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

United States are still to reap actual dividends. In 2022, Americans had the most unfavorable view of China in 14 years and 60% of Americans believed that China could pose an economic and military threat to the United States.¹⁶² American public opinion toward China has been steady since the 1990s but is subject to change with the global environment in which the United States and China interact. The US-China trade war, the US allegations of cyber espionage against China, the Chinese military posture in East Asia, and the Covid-19 outbreak in December 2019 have negatively affected the American view of China. Similarly, the Chinese government's use of CIs for image improvement in the United States has raised eyebrows and could undermine nation branding efforts. In August 2020 United States designated CIs as US centers as 'foreign entities' which carry out Chinese propaganda in US educational institutions.¹⁶³ In February 2020, nine major Chinese state media outlets were labeled 'foreign missions.' In June 2020, three other Chinese Media outlets were designated as 'foreign missions,' now subject to more stringent regulation by the US government.¹⁶⁴ In the context of escalating tensions between the United States and China, it is evident that nation branding endeavors have not effectively bolstered China's soft power within the United States. Consequently, addressing the existing lack of trust necessitates a shift toward a more organic approach to cultural initiatives and nation branding endeavors. This entails the involvement of private enterprises and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), minimizing governmental intervention.

¹⁶² Laura Silver, Kat Devlin and Christine Huang, "U.S. Views of China Turn Sharply Negative Amid Trade Tensions," *Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends*, August 12, 2019.

¹⁶³ Designation of the Confucius Institute U.S. Center as Foreign Mission of the PRC, the U.S. Department of States, August 13, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/designation-of-the-confucius-institute-u-s-center-as-a-foreign-mission-of-the-prc/>, accessed on December 14, 2020.

¹⁶⁴ "Designation of Additional Chinese Media Entities as Foreign Missions", the U.S. Department of State, June 22, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/designation-of-additional-chinese-media-entities-as-foreign-missions/>, accessed on December 14, 2020.



China's Relational Public Diplomacy in the United States

RELATIONAL PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The third feature of integrated public diplomacy is relational public diplomacy. Such initiatives are long-term engagements based on soft power programs.¹ Jan Melissen pointed out that PD may not only be the conception but also the expression of soft power,² it is 'about promoting and maintaining smooth international relationships.'³ Consequently, relational diplomacy is the tool to develop such external relations. Building relationships is the primary objective of public diplomacy. With this objective in sight, relational diplomacy does not pursue a specific policy. Instead, it promotes mutual understanding between country and foreign governments.⁴ Relational activities identify commonalities between the public and develop communication linkage through various contacts.⁵

¹ Guy Golan, "An Integrated Approach to Public Diplomacy" 1252.

² Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy*, 34.

³ Ibid., 21.

⁴ Lisa Tam, "Interpersonal Approaches to Relationship Building: Diplomat as a Human Agent of Public Diplomacy" *Place Building and Public Diplomacy*, 15:2 (2019): 139.

⁵ Rhonda S. Zaharna, "Mapping Out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives: Information and Relational Communication Frameworks" in Nancy Snow and Phillip M. Taylor, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Rutledge, 2008): 91.

Efficient public diplomacy relies on reciprocal two-way communication, allowing the communicator to convey their values while comprehending the thoughts of the listener.⁶ R.S. Zaharna, within public diplomacy's purview, has developed a 'relational framework' which focuses on relationship-building and positive maintenance of social structures to solve communication problems and advance political objectives.⁷ Zaharna outlines six characteristics of his Relational Model of PD which include; as the first essential purpose is developing relationships, relational diplomacy must identify, explain, and establish the need to build relationships. The heart of the relational approach is to expand and strengthen relations and eliminate any impediments that can cause erosion. The second component is similarity and common interest between the public of messengers and recipients. Commonalities in cultures, values, and institutions provide an enabling environment for a relational approach. As pointed out by Mark Leonard, 'building relationships, starting from understanding other countries' needs, cultures and peoples and then looking for areas to make common cause.'⁸ The third aspect of relationship building is commitment, credibility, and respect based on reciprocity through reinforcing actions. Fourth, a feature of relational initiatives is 'trust-building,' which is a requisite of mutuality, leading toward the relationship between the public. A fifth important aspect is cultivating participatory initiatives from the leadership level to ordinary citizens, demonstrating the broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in building relationships. Lastly, continuity and sustainability portray the commitment pooled at strengthening the relationship between the parties.⁹

Scholars and practitioners of PD have articulated various initiatives that entail relational Public Diplomacy practices. Previously, literature on cultural activities holds that cultural initiatives based on soft power were

⁶ Joseph Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power" 103.

⁷ Rhonda S. Zaharna, *Battles to Bridges: U.S. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy after 9/11* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2010): 146.

⁸ Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2002): 18.

⁹ R. S. Zaharna, *Battles to Bridges: U.S. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy After 9/11*, 148–149.

the only vehicle to cultivate long-term relationships.¹⁰ Growing scholarship on relational diplomacy has shown the impact of exchange programs, leadership level visits, seminars, dialogues, and exhibitions in relationship development.¹¹ As Zahrana suggested, these relations-building programs aimed at different participation levels, scope, time duration, and policy objectives.¹²

CHINA'S RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING INITIATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES

A three-tier relationship-building initiative devised by Zahrana would help appraise the Chinese relational initiatives in the United States. These include developing cultural initiatives, people-to-people contact, and building trust.

- a. The first Tier Relationship-Building Initiatives: Exchange Programs and Visits which include (Cultural and Educational Exchange Programs, Leadership Visits,).
- b. Tier two Relationship-Building Initiatives (Cultural and Language Institutes, Development Aid Projects, 'Twinning' Arrangements, Relationship-Building Campaigns, Non-political Networking Schemes).
- c. Tier three which includes Relationship-Building Initiatives: Policy Networking Strategy and Coalition Building.¹³

A country like China is known to advance its PD through cultural initiatives which is a core pillar of its soft power strategy. Culture significantly influences China's understanding of converting soft power and

¹⁰ Cynthia P. Schneider, "Cultural Communicates: U.S. Diplomacy that Works" in Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2005): 16.

¹¹ Shaun Riordan, "Dialogue-Based Public Diplomacy: A New Foreign Policy Paradigm?" The Hague, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, *Clingendael, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, 95, (November 2004): 18.

¹² Rhonda S. Zaharna, "Mapping out a Spectrum of Public Diplomacy Initiatives: Information and Relational Communication Frameworks" 93.

¹³ Ibid., 93, 94, 95, 96.

PD into building relationships. China differs from the West in its relationship pursuits. China reflects Eastern attributes such as collectivism vs. Western individualism, introvert vs. extrovert, western ideas of openness in communication against Chinese way of discreet and nonverbal communication. Inspired by Confucius's values, Chinese relational initiatives underline good deeds over boosting to attract attention.¹⁴

CHINESE CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

For China, culture is an important source of its soft power. The Confucian values aimed at cultivating amicable relationships among fellow beings have inspired the cultural imprints on soft power. Relational interactions form the core of the Confucius system.¹⁵ For over 5000 years, China has attracted traders, explorers, students, and holy men in quest of wisdom, wealth, and inspiration. This interaction expanded Chinese civilization beyond its national boundaries and advanced unique Chinese cultural imprints among other nations.¹⁶ Chinese present quest toward soft power is based on cultural soft power inspired by the continuity of civilizational and cultural glory.¹⁷ Improvement of China's national image through cultural diplomacy and soft power was integrated as a national strategy during President Hu Jintao's era¹⁸ (2003–2007) and carried forward by his successor President Xi Jinping.¹⁹ In 2011, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi 2011 expressed the importance of culture in Chinese foreign policy; 'China should actively engage in PD to comprehensively develop

¹⁴ Yiwei Wang, "Relational Dimensions of a Chinese Model of Public Diplomacy" in Rhonda S. Zaharna, et al., ed., *Relational, Networked and Collaborative Approaches to Public Diplomacy: The Connective Mindshift* (New York: Rutledge, 2013): 89, 90.

¹⁵ Rhode S. Zaharna, Jennifer Hubbert and Falk Hartig, "Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China's Soft Power" *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*, 3 (September 2013): 10.

¹⁶ Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese Soft Power" *Survival*, 48:2 (Summer 2006): 18.

¹⁷ Jian Wang, "Introduction: China's Search of Soft Power" in Jian Wang, ed., *Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication* (New York: Macmillan, 2011): 12.

¹⁸ Yiwei Wang, "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power" 258.

¹⁹ Danielly Silva Ramos Becard and Paulo Menechelli Filho, "Chinese Cultural Diplomacy: instruments in China's Strategy for International Insertion in the 21st Century" *Polít. Int.*, 62:1 (Brasília 2019).

its soft power and further boost its international appeal and influence... This is both a pressing task and a long-term strategy.²⁰ Chinese politicians realized its rise had spurred global anxiety, which should be addressed through a pragmatic foreign policy. Learning from the negative connotation of hard power, the Chinese political elite recognized the importance of soft power for its foreign policy to garner favorable global projection.²¹ Since the 2003 intervention in Iraq, the US unilateralist policies put a dent on the US global image as responsible super power. On the contrary, China aspires to be accepted as a more acceptable and responsible global power. Yet, China has a huge task to nullify the Western media's trial of the Communist inspired one-party system, economic practices, and relations with the countries in the Asia Pacific.

A Pew Survey on Global Attitudes and Trends in 2017 shows that 44% of Americans saw China favorably compared to 38% in 2018.²² The Covid-19 outbreak has negatively impacted American public opinion of China, which has declined to 33% in 2020.²³ Another Pew Survey in March 2023 revealed 83% of Americans had a negative perception of China, with 44% having highly unfavorable views.²⁴ Under Xi Jinping's administration, many Americans have expressed concerns regarding the human rights situation in China and criticized its intimate partnership with Putin-led Russia.²⁵ A change in American perception toward China

²⁰ Yang Jiechi, "China's Public Diplomacy" *Qiushi Journal*, 3:4 (July 2011).

²¹ Hongyi Lai, "China's Cultural Diplomacy: Going for Soft Power" Hongyi Lai and Yiyi Lu, ed., *China's Soft Power and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 84.

²² "As Trade Tensions Rise, Fewer Americans See China Favorably" *Pew Research Center*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org>, accessed on July 29, 2019.

²³ "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries" *Pew Research Center*, October 06, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

²⁴ Laura Silver, Christine Huang, Laura Clancy, and Moira Fagan, "Americans Are Critical of China's Global Role—As Well as Its Relationship With Russia." *Pew Research Center*, April 12, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/04/12/americans-are-critical-of-chinas-global-role-as-well-as-its-relationship-with-russia/>.

²⁵ Laura Silver, Christine Huang, and Laura Clancy, "How Global Public Opinion of China Has Shifted in the Xi Era" *Pew Research Center*, September 28, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/09/28/how-global-public-opinion-of-china-has-shifted-in-the-xi-era/>.

would require a persistent investment in soft power and PD. An image of cultural soft power could undermine the negative projection of China and would be instrumental in cultivating good relations with the United States.²⁶

After its induction in the WTO, China 2001 formulated a national strategy with a cultural front of ‘going global.’ Chinese former Cultural Minister Sun Jiazheng announced that China’s culture and mainstream media would aim to inspire the international community with a global outreach campaign. This campaign was a 10-year program starting in 2002.²⁷ In 2006, Sun Jiazheng declared that culture is paramount for Chinese diplomacy and part of going out strategy after the economy and politics. To augment Chinese presence in the international cultural markets, especially in the United States, CPC introduced the Eleventh Five Year Plan from 2005–2011.²⁸ The primary task of this strategy was to promote foreign cultural exchanges, explore more channels of communication, invest in and develop overseas cultural projects.²⁹ The Cultural Committee of the Communist Party of China declared its national objective to develop China into a ‘Cultural Soft power and enhance the influence of Chinese Culture’ globally.³⁰ In 2015, China inaugurated BRI, making cultural connectivity a vital component.³¹ The expansion of cultural ties in regional connectivity and development agenda

²⁶ Hongyi Lai, “China’s Cultural Diplomacy: Going for Soft Power” 84.

²⁷ Xin Liu, “China’s Cultural Diplomacy: A Great Leap Outward with Chinese Characteristics? Multiple Comparative Case Studies of the Confucius Institutes” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28:118 (2019); Liying Yang, “The Significance of the ‘Going Global’ Strategy of Chinese Culture in the New Era” *People’s Tribune* (11 August 2014).

²⁸ “The 11th Five-Year Plan: Targets, Paths and Policy Orientation, National Development and Reform Commission” 2006–03–23, <http://en.ndrc.gov.cn>, accessed on July 29, 2019.

²⁹ Xiaomei Zhu, “Teaching Chinese Culture in College English Classes in the Context of Outreaching Strategy” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9:7 (July 2019): 873.

³⁰ “Full Text of Hu Jintao’s Report at 17th Party Congress” *Qinshi Journal*, (30–09–2011); David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: the Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 165.

³¹ “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) People’s Republic of China, March 2015, <http://en.ndrc.gov.cn>, accessed on July 30, 2022. And David Shambaugh, “China’s Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015); Charles Clover and Sherry, Fi Ju, “China’s Diplomatic Budget Doubles Under Xi Jinping” *Financial Times*, March 06, 2018.

demonstrates the importance of cultural initiative in the Chinese national strategy. Under President Xi Jinping, China's annual spending on soft power-based programs stood at around \$10 billion annually from 2011–2018, greater than total combined spending of the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Germany on similar initiatives.³²

President Hu Jintao's address to the 17th Party Congress in 2007 articulated the growing importance of culture and soft power in the Chinese PD strategy;

In the present era, culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength, and the Chinese people have an increasingly ardent desire for a richer cultural life. We must keep to the orientation of advanced socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural development, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests, enrich the cultural life in Chinese society and inspire the enthusiasm of the people for progress.³³

A three-tier institutional framework for the effective implementation of cultural push, major national universities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism have been entrusted with reconciling cultural diplomacy with implementation worldwide. Centers for journalism with PD majors and a symposium on soft power across universities reaffirm Chinese seriousness toward their global image.³⁴ In 2003, a Mass Diplomacy Department was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,³⁵ renamed the Office of PD in 2010. Alongside this, the Information Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs covers all diplomatic activities and explains foreign policy issues. Information Office also covers

³² Jay Sophalkalyan, "China, Money Can't Buy You Love" *Journal of Political Inquiry*, January 19, 2023. <https://jpinyu.com/2023/01/19/china-money-cant-buy-you-love/>.

³³ "Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 17th Party Congress" October 24, 2007, <http://www.gov.cn>, accessed on July 26, 2019.

³⁴ David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: the Partial Power*, 168.

³⁵ Zhao Kejin, "The Motivation Behind Chinese Public Diplomacy" *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 8:2 (2015): 3.

events and activities related to PD.³⁶ Simultaneously, the Ministry of Culture is entrusted with performing multiple tasks such as organizing cultural activities, collaborating toward intercultural exchanges, establishing and patronizing CI overseas, and managing related activities in China and foreign countries.³⁷ This ministry is also tasked with increasing soft power by attracting cultural tourism in China.

Cultural diplomacy constitutes a significant portion of Chinese investment. Under the dictum of converting China into a cultural Soft Superpower, Hu Jintao, in the 2012, pronounced that;

Because intellectual and cultural exchange, as well as integration and competition globally, is getting increasingly intense, he who takes the dominant position in the cultural development has a strong cultural soft power and thus can be the winner in the intense international competition.³⁸

Cultural diplomacy would continue to be the cornerstone of Chinese soft power based strategy in the United States.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTIONS (CIs)

Confucius Institutions (CIs) refers to the Chinese sage Confucius (551–479 BC). The name refers to the essence of 5000 years of Chinese culture through the teaching of Confucius's values.³⁹ Modern CIs share ideas of Confucius's philosophy as an instrument for establishing enduring relationships.⁴⁰ Jian Wang argues that communication is the

³⁶ Falk Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy, The Rise of the Confucius Institute* (London: Routledge, 2016): 86.

³⁷ Ministry of Culture, <https://english.moc.gov.tw>, accessed July 31, 2019.

³⁸ Full text: Report of Hu Jintao to the 18th CPC National Congress, "Developing a Strong Socialist Culture in China" <http://www.china.org.cn>, accessed on July 31, 2019.

³⁹ "Confucian in the Modern World: Zen Confucianism and Modern Japan" June 23, 2017, the Confucius Weekly Bulletin, <https://confucianweeklybulletin.wordpress.com/category/confucian-in-the-modern-world/page/7/>, accessed on December 13, 2020. Also see David Y. F. Ho, "Interpersonal Relationships and Relationship Dominance: An Analysis Based on Methodological Relationism" *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 1 (1998): 2.

⁴⁰ Rhode S. Zaharna, Jennifer Hubbert and Falk Hartig, "Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China's Soft Power" *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*, 3 (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2014): 10.

key to soft power-based PD programs.⁴¹ Fundamentally, soft power is a communication-based approach, which can yield various results based on how soft power is used. Both the United States and China utilize soft power to communicate with foreign audiences to obtain desired outcomes. For instance, after the 9/11, the United States employed a mass communication approach to engage a specific audience through a static message. Whereas, China's tilt toward Soft Power is based on the approach to communicating with the foreign audience through cultural diplomacy. Beijing's strategy focuses on the 'Network Communication Approach' by creating network structures such as CIs, which work online and offline to maintain sustainable communication with the targeted audience.⁴² China, therefore, conceptualizes the CIs as an instrument of cultural outreach and language promotion.

The modern means of communication and connectivity supplement China's relational strategy in a big way. China sees more rationale in investing in relationship-building and transmitting culture through communication.⁴³ The Linchpin of the Chinese relational approach globally is the CIs. The CI Program, initiated in 2004, supports Chinese culture, language, and teaching globally. According to the US Association of Scholars, as of July 2019, ninety Confucius Institutes are working in the United States under the Chinese Ministry of Education, known as Hanban.⁴⁴ However, according to a report by the University World News, 104 Confucius Institutes were closed in the United States by the end of 2021.⁴⁵ According to the updated report by the US National Association of Scholars, there are currently 10 Confucius Institutes in the United States. At the same time, as many as 28 continue to operate under

⁴¹ Jian Wang, *Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication* (New York: Macmillan, 2011): 3.

⁴² R.S. Zaharna, et al., "Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China's Soft Power" 11.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?" National Association of Scholars, April 9, 2018 <https://www.nas.org>, accessed on July 30, 2019.

⁴⁵ Yojana Sharma. "Confucius Institutes Reappear Under New Names—Report." *University World News*, 30 June 2022. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220630152610783>.

different names offering similar programs.⁴⁶ The importance of Hanban has been augmented with the management and regulation of the CIs. Hanban is tasked to develop and administer Chinese Teaching programs and promote Chinese Language globally.⁴⁷ Hanban also facilitates the cultural exchange program internationally.⁴⁸

Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multiculturalism, and to construct a harmonious world.⁴⁹

Keeping the mission statement of Confucius Institutions in view, it serves three purposes. First, to promote the Chinese language as a tool to facilitate Chinese culture internationally; second, to facilitate people-to-people contact through exchange programs; and lastly, to encourage the innate Chinese goal of a harmonious world. Scholars studying Chinese PD have pointed out that CI is more than a cultural tool. James Paradise states that CIs promote Chinese business activities alongside language and cultural promotion.⁵⁰ Li Junping identified business promotion and opportunities for locating open markets during globalization.⁵¹

⁴⁶ “How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?” *National Association of Scholars*, June 20, 2023. https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states.

⁴⁷ <http://www.hanban.org>, accessed August 1, 2019.

⁴⁸ “Is China Soft Power Programme Working?” *China Power*. <https://chinapower.csis.org>, accessed on July 31, 2019.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ James F. Paradise, “China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing’s Soft Power” *Asian Survey*, 49:4 (2009): 649.

⁵¹ Li Junping, “How Do We Judge Confucius Today? A Discussion of the Confucius Institute Phenomenon” *Forum of Social Science*, 1:5 (2008): 41, 47.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTIONS CIs IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States is arguably the most crucial international outreach destination for Confucius Institutions. In 2004, the CIs number peaked in the United States by 2016, more than 100 in twelve years.⁵² As of July 2019, the total number of Hanban-operated CIs in the United States was 90, more significant than the total number of CIs in the South East Asian region.⁵³ This number came down to almost 30 in 2021,⁵⁴ and according to the updated report by the National Association of Scholars, only seven Confucius Institutes are operational in the United States as of December 2022, while as many as 28 offer the same program and operate under a different name.⁵⁵ According to the data compiled by the National Association of Scholars, Hanban also administers 501 Confucius classrooms (CCs) across the United States at the school level.^{56,57} These cultural institutions have been instrumental in promoting Chinese culture in United States despite of strict scrutiny by the US government in the recent years.

The first CI was established in the United States at the University of Maryland Park in 2004.⁵⁸ The CIs perform four primary functions: offering Chinese Courses (CC), teacher education, academic activities, and cultural events.⁵⁹ In 2018 alone, over 420,000 students were enrolled

⁵² Emily T. Metzgar and Jing Su, "Friends from Afar? American Media Coverage of Chinese Confucius Institutes" *Journalism Practice*, 11:8 (2016): 1.

⁵³ "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?" <https://www.nas.org>.

⁵⁴ "Confucius Institutes in the United States" *USC US-China Institute*, November 18, 2021. <https://china.usc.edu/confucius-institutes-united-states>.

⁵⁵ "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?" *National Association of Scholars*, June 20, 2023. https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states.

⁵⁶ Rachele Peterson, "Outsourced to China Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education" *Report by National Association of Scholars* (April 26, 2017): 12.

⁵⁷ Lee Edwards, "Confucius Institutes: China's Trojan Horse" *The Heritage Foundation*, May 27, 2021. <https://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/commentary/confucius-institutes-chinas-trojan-horse>.

⁵⁸ Mike Gonzalez, "Chinas Public Opinion Warfare: How our Culture Industry Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the PRC" *Heritage Backgrounder* (February 2015).

⁵⁹ Shuai Li and Richard Tucker, "A Survey of the U.S. Confucius Institutes: Opportunities and Challenges in Promoting Chinese Language and Culture Education" *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*, 48:1 (2013): 39.

in CIs and CCs in more than 500 institutes across the United States.⁶⁰ In 2015, President Obama and Xi Jinping, under the *One Million Strong* initiative, agreed to increase the number of K2 students learning Mandarin to 1 million by 2020 compared to 200,000 enrolled in 2015.⁶¹ Regarding the strategic importance of US–China relations, President Obama, in May 2010, started the ‘100,000 Strong’ initiative to increase the number of American Students in China to 100,000 by 2020.⁶²

Most CIs are based in State Universities in collaboration with a Chinese university. Many universities in the United States extended this facility by establishing Confucius Classrooms (CCs) in local schools at the primary and secondary levels.⁶³ Due to the significant presence of CIs and CCs, a Confucius Institute US Center branch office is established in Washington, DC., to administer these institutions.⁶⁴ The inauguration of CI in American Universities is signed during the official visits organized by Hanban. Further, CIs enable students/teachers to exchange programs and research collaboration between partner universities.⁶⁵ The educational exchange programs enrolled around 21,000 American students in Chinese institutions in 2019 compared to 3,693 in 2007.⁶⁶ Even though this number

⁶⁰ “Building the Global Community: Growing Lifelong Connection” Confucius Institute U.S. Center, 2018 Annual Report: 3.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, “Diplomacy in Action 2009–2017: Archived Content.” <https://findit.state.gov>, accessed on August 2, 2019; “Strengthening American Capacity of Understand China.” <https://100kstrong.org>, accessed on August 2, 2019. Initially ‘US-China Strong’ was an initiative by the US State Department which has transitioned into a non-profit Organization. Its goal is to explore the avenues of cultural exchange between United States and China.

⁶² “100,000 Strong.” <https://100kstrong.org/initiatives/100k-strong>, accessed on August 2, 2019.

⁶³ Rhode S. Zaharna, “Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China’s Soft Power” 15.

⁶⁴ Mission Statement, “Confucius Institute U.S. Center.” <http://www.ciuscenter.org>, accessed on August 2, 2019.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Statistical Report on International Students in China for 2018” Ministry of Education, the People’s Republic of China, April 18, 2019, <http://en.moe.gov.cn>, accessed on August 3, 2019.

has come down to 12,000 students in the post-Covid era,⁶⁷ Such a significant rise of American students in China explains the growing influence and attraction of CIs in the United States.

Jeffrey Gil has assessed the CCs and CIs on the students learning the Chinese language, culture, and perception of China. Students have shown keen interest in learning Chinese and explained how CCs could assist students in interacting more with the Chinese language from school to the university level. Likewise, students provided insight into the excellent quality of teaching staff and literature supplied by the Hanban, which was instrumental in their understanding of the Chinese language.⁶⁸ The interviewees attributed the increasing number of CIs and CCs to the quality of education and the growing interest of American students in Chinese culture. Socially, CIs and CCs have developed an indirect connection with the parents who have shown approval of the benefits of Chinese language training.⁶⁹ A sample of interviewees from teachers maintained that with the CIs, most universities in the United States needed more funds to run Chinese language courses. Teachers also pointed out the utility and benefit of experienced staff and online resources from partner institutions in China to better understand the Chinese language.⁷⁰

The underlining goal of CIs is to create a positive perception of China's image. Over a decade, thousands of American students have graduated from the CIs, including journalists, academia, office holders, diplomats, and workers. Studies and opinion polls suggest that these not only carry relatively favorable views of the country, people, and culture associated with the language but also construct the perception of

⁶⁷ "How Many American Students Study in China" *Panda Admission*, May 23, 2023. <https://www.panda-admission.com/Students/How-Many-American-Students-Study-in-China/14/7>.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey Gil, *Soft power and the World Wide Promotion of the Chinese Language Learning: The Confucius Institute Project* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2019): 56.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Stephen I. Levine, et al. "The Debate over Confucius Institutes in the United States: A China File Conversation on the Promises and Perils of Partnering with Beijing on Education" *Foreign Policy* (July 11, 2014); Lionel M. Jensen, "Culture Industry, Power, and the Spectacle of China's 'Confucius Institutes'" in Timothy B. Weston and Lionel M. Jensen, ed., *China In and Beyond the Headlines* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012): 273.

others in their native community.⁷¹ This notion is shared by many in the United States despite rising tension between the United States and China on trade issues. Harvey Parlman, former chancellor of the University of Nebraska, pointed out that in collaboration with a partner university in China, Nebraska University has made economic progress in the local agriculture sector.⁷² Robert C. Daugherty, Executive Dean of the Forbes School of Business and Technology, believes that the United States and China have huge potential in education exchanges. Through educational exchange programs, American students can benefit from Chinese educational investment in scientific innovation and technology.⁷³

CULTURAL GOODS EXPORT

Since integrating into World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China has become a key player in the global trade and investment paradigm. China is among the largest trading partners in all regions and major global economies. Besides consumer products, China has excelled in cultural goods export, an essential aspect of China's Soft Power Strategy. Chinese Cultural industry has been influenced by three factors (a) Growing demand for Chinese cultural goods in foreign countries, (b) change and reform in Chinese culture, and (c) globalization of Chinese culture as a result of economic development.⁷⁴ The primary Chinese cultural goods and exports include; (a) Cultural and Natural Heritage, (b) Performance and Celebration, (c) Visual Arts and Crafts, (d) Books and Press, (e)

⁷¹ Patrick R. Moran, *Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice*, Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2001): 33.

⁷² "U.S.-China Education Exchanges: 40 Years of Engagement in Higher Education" interview with Harvey Parlman et al. on April 24, 2018, <https://www.ciuscenter.org/u-s-china-educational-exchanges-40-years-of-engagement-in-higher-education/>, accessed on December 13, 2022.

⁷³ "Why U.S.-China Collaboration in Education Makes Sense" *Forbes China*, October 1, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeschina/2019/10/01/why-u-s-china-collaboration-in-education-makes-sense/?sh=376e52155975>, accessed on December 13, 2022.

⁷⁴ Claire Seungeun Lee, *Soft Power Made in China: The Dilemmas of Online and Offline Media and Transnational Audiences* (New York: Macmillan, 2018): 30.

Audio-visual and Interactive Media, (f) Design and Creative Services.⁷⁵ The following figure shows the major imports of Chinese cultural goods.

The United States has been the biggest market for Chinese cultural export goods from 1992 to 2014. In 2019, China's cultural exports were around \$99.89 billion.⁷⁶ In 2021, China's export of cultural goods reached \$155.8 billion, which was 43.4% more than the year 2020, and for the first time, the total foreign trade volume of cultural products exceeded \$200 billion in 2021.^{77,78} The graph indicates that most of these exports go to the United States. The flow of cultural exports depends upon higher living standards and the cultural gap, which reflects consumers' temperament, aesthetics, and interest. Intercultural connectivity, likability, and technological advancement have overcome ideological barriers resulting in more consumption of Chinese cultural goods in the United States.⁷⁹ These cultural exports include movies, novels, statutes, paintings, and arts and crafts, showing China's soft power blueprint and cultural outlook has improved cultural brand among American consumers.

CHINESE LEADERSHIP VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES

The presidents are diplomat-in-chiefs and for China, presidents are the public face of their government. Since its opening, Chinese leaders have traveled extensively globally and candidly interacted with ordinary people.⁸⁰ There is always a great significance attached to Chinese leadership visits to the United States. The Sino-US rapprochement of 1972

⁷⁵ Yueling Xiao, "The Research on China Export Trade in Cultural Goods" Advances in Computer Science Research (ACSR) presented on the 7th International Conference on Education, *Management, Information and Computer Science ICEMC*, 73 (2017): 825.

⁷⁶ "China's Cultural Export up 8.9 Percent in 2019" *China International Import Expo*, 23, March 2020, <https://www.ciie.org/zbh/en/news/exhibition/News/20200323/21540.html>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

⁷⁷ Zhang Jie, "China's Cultural Trade Reaching New Heights" *China Daily Information Co (CDIC)*, August 2, 2022. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202208/02/WS62e8c92aa310fd2b29e6fcdf.html>.

⁷⁸ Huaxia. "China's Foreign Cultural Trade Surges 38.7 Percent in 2021" *Xinhua*, July 21, 2022. <https://english.news.cn/20220721/a90f7e59ac284ae1afce4bdc66912990/c.html>.

⁷⁹ Yueling Xiao, "The Research on China Export Trade in Cultural Goods" 828.

⁸⁰ Ingrid d' Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy*, 147.

was a turnaround in bilateral relations. Previously, Sino-US summits have helped in recalibrating bilateral ties. At a time when the United States and China are at loggerheads, the role of political elites, especially the Presidents, becomes paramount in preserving the health of bilateral engagement. Presidents are the highest rank diplomats. They can play a constructive role in mitigating the trust deficit and provide a platform for pragmatic engagement through relational public diplomacy.⁸¹ An important inventory of summits diplomacy exists between the United States and China.

On January 28, 1979, Deng Xiaoping, China's then Premier, and future president, made his first historic visit to the United States by a top leader of New China. At the White House South Lawn, the American and Chinese flags hoisted side by side, and President Carter and Premier Deng addressed a press briefing. The most iconic moment of the visit was Premier Deng's wearing a ten-gallon cowboy hat at a rodeo in Houston, Texas. Taking a spin on the American stagecoach and softening the demonized image of Chinese leaders created over two decades of Sino-US animosity.⁸² People laughed, cheered, and clapped at Deng's gesture and he could charm and win over the American public. Arguably, Deng's overtures were a first instance of a Chinese soft power exhibition in the United States.

Against the backdrop of the official political and economic engagements, the Chinese Foreign Office makes prior strategies for PD during the Summit visits. Chinese leaders make gestures during such visits to impress the American leadership and the public. This approach was quite evident during President Jian Zeming's eight days visit to the United States. On October 27, 1997, President Jian Zemin landed in the United States, the first state visit of a Chinese President in 12 years. With a big smile on his face, he met American leadership. He visited Harvard against the advice of the White House to face tough questions on Human Rights, Thiamin Square, and Tibet, to which he replied in humor and pacified the fears of rising China.⁸³ During his visit to Honolulu, President Jiang

⁸¹ Jian Wang, *Rising Soft Power: China* (Los Angeles: USC Center of Public Diplomacy, 2015): 8.

⁸² John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016): 412.

⁸³ Steven Erlanger, "Jiang Draws Applause in His Talk at Harvard" *New York Times*, November 2, 1997.

Zemin swam at Waikiki Beach. Unfazed by his 71 years of age, President Zemin took breaststroke after breaststroke showing his vitality in the public swim and portraying a humanized image of Chinese leadership.⁸⁴ On his visit to Los Angeles, he met local leaders, made multibillion-dollar trade deals, and was able to implant his image as an open-minded statement seeking cooperation on investment, technology, and education from the United States. Jiang opted to visit historical sites that matter most to the Americans, such as Pearl Harbor, Colonial Williamsburg, and Philadelphia and its Independence Hall and talked about people in China's respect for American history.⁸⁵ Zemin's visit underscored China's importance to its image and relations in public diplomacy. China also understands how its appearance can influence the political and economic interests in the US democratic setting where public opinion means a lot.

President Zemin was succeeded by President Hu Jintao, who played a pivotal role in shaping China's 'Soft Power' and PD strategy. During his tenure as president, Hu Jintao actively worked toward enhancing China's international influence and improving its global image. Hu Jintao's visit to the United States in 2011 was a thoughtful and planned display of public diplomacy. During the visit, he engaged with the media and answered contentious questions on Sino-US relations. On his visit to the Midwest Chicago, he assured the American industrial manufacturers and agricultural sector about the growing demand for American products in China as he envisaged the great potential of trade to address local unemployment. He signed a USD\$45 billion import deal with the United States that would create over 200,000 American jobs.⁸⁶ President Hu Jintao repeatedly reaffirmed that China's rise should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat to address the growing concern among the US public. In his interaction with students on a visit to CI and Walter Payton College,

⁸⁴ Seth Faison, "From Crowds on the Soapbox, a Richer Lather Against China" *New York Times*, October 28, 1997.

⁸⁵ Seth Faison, "In Chinese Politics, Too, All Photo Ops Are Local" *New York Times*, October 28, 1997.

⁸⁶ Deanna Bellandi, Caryn Rousseau, "China's Hu Meets Business Leaders in Chicago" *The Seattle Times*, January 21, 2011.

Preparatory High School, he offered exchange opportunities for students. He reiterated the role of students in bolstering ties between the United States and China.⁸⁷

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang followed their predecessors' footsteps to dedicate their predilection to Public Diplomacy. In his 2012 trip to the United States, vice President Xi Jinping displayed frank and easygoing stature. In 1985 President Xi, a mid-level functionary, visited the United States and stayed in Iowa state for two weeks. During a visit to Iowa, he rode a tractor cab met dozens of acquaintances in the city. All seventeen people were invited to meet Premier Xi, whom he knew from his 1985 trip to Iowa. These moments showed his desire to be recognized as a Chinese leader who remembers hospitality and care for the American people.⁸⁸ On his visit to Las Angeles, Premier Xi watched a basketball match, laughed, and chattered with his host wearing a tieless shirt.⁸⁹ Again on his visit to the United States in 2015, President Xi visited Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Washington. A carefully choreographed visit of President Xi was planned at a place that he visited in 1993 as a lower-level official. Chinese President invited 100 students to visit China from the school for cultural and educational exchange.⁹⁰ The new Chinese leadership has shown that they are approachable and ready to engage in public diplomacy. These visits show that Chinese leaders have consistently presented a candid and dependable image of China, and this perception has been carefully nurtured through a persistent and unwavering commitment to a Soft Power-based PD strategy.

This assertion is supported by the Results from the 2019 Gallup Survey Titled 'Image of US Leadership Now Poorer than China,' in which people from 113 countries were interviewed. Chinese leadership secured 34% approval against 31% for the US leadership.⁹¹ However, the post-Covid

⁸⁷ Erin Meyer and Andrew L. Wang, "Hu Jintao Pays Visit to Payton Prep" *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 2011.

⁸⁸ Kirk Johnson, "For the Vice President of China, Tea Time in Iowa" *New York Times*, February 15, 2012.

⁸⁹ Keith B. Richburg, "Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping's U.S. Trip Plays Well Back Home" *The Washington Post*, February 18, 2012.

⁹⁰ Yan Lin, "Why President Xi Chose to Visit Lincoln High School" *China Daily*, September 24, 2015.

⁹¹ Julie Ray, "Image of US Leadership now Poorer than China" *Gallup*, February 28, 2019.

pandemic has limited high-level visits, and a Gallup 2023 survey shows that only 15% of American citizens see China positively. It is a record-low response toward China approval since the much-hyped Chinese surveillance balloon was identified and shot down in the US airspace in January 2023.⁹²

SISTER CITIES DIPLOMACY

The subnational tier of relational PD is of significant value. Sister City Diplomacy, a variant of people-to-people contact, has increased unprecedentedly in recent years. Agreements termed sister city or twin city diplomacy greatly impact global mobility, cultural exchanges, and knowledge sharing toward addressing common problems. In his lecture ‘Global and Local Cities’ in 1993, Richard V. Knight highlighted the importance of knowledge and technology through sister city exchange programs. Since the normalization of relations, the subnational tier of diplomacy has dramatically impacted the conduct of Chinese PD in the United States.⁹³

In 2019, 40 years of US–China bilateral diplomatic relations coincided with 40 years of sister city or twin city diplomacy. On July 17, the ‘Fourth Sino-US Sister Cities Mayor Summit’ was held in Huston, Texas, to mark the 40th anniversary of city diplomacy under the theme of ‘40 Years Ahead: Stronger Friendship, Closer Cooperation.’⁹⁴ China gives utmost importance to public diplomacy; city diplomacy has enormous potential to exercise soft power in the United States. China has developed an institutional framework to augment and utilize the potential of city diplomacy. As of 2019, the United States and China shared 277 twin city pairs. Interestingly, in the post-Covid period, this number has increased to 284 sister provinces/Cities, per the Chinese Foreign Ministry.⁹⁵ The

⁹² Megan Brennan, “Record-Low 15% of Americans View China Favorably” *Gallup*, March 7, 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/471551/record-low-americans-view-china-favorably.aspx>.

⁹³ C. Fred Bergsten, et al., *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute of International Economics, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008): 50.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on June 29, 2023. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202306/t20230629_11105690.html, accessed on July 29, 2023.

Chinese People Association with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) handles the exchanges of Local Government Cooperation with foreign local bodies, hosts NGO-level meetings, and organizes events and programs to increase citizen diplomacy between Chinese and foreign citizens. The core objective of CPAFFC is to pursue peaceful development and unification and the progress of humanity.⁹⁶ The main department of CPAFFC is to promote city diplomacy, which includes Cultural Exchanges, China International Friendship Cities Association, China Service Center for Friendship and Cooperation with Foreign Countries, and Exchange Center for International Friendship Cities.⁹⁷ Under the CPAFFC, thousands of bilateral diplomatic initiatives have significantly impacted cultivating people-to-people contacts. The Chinese Ministry of foreign affairs also keenly promotes people-to-people contact and developed programs where local Chinese leaders can contact American citizens.

In 1979, after restoring Sino-US diplomatic ties, St. Louis was the first US city to enter a Chinese sister city relationship with Nanjing,⁹⁸ followed by Chinese Hubei Province and the US State of Ohio.⁹⁹ President Xi Jinping has become prominent in promoting City diplomacy in recent years. As discussed earlier, as a mid-career functionary, President Xi visited Iowa in 1985 through a Twin City exchange program to bolster Sino-US citizen diplomacy. 2012 when President Xi visited the city, he signed a \$4.3 billion agreement to import soybeans from Iowa.¹⁰⁰ On his 2015 visit to the United States, President Xi visited his friends in Tacoma city, where he signed a sister city agreement with the Chinese city of Fuzhou in 1993. He visited Lincoln High School, where he gifted 100 exchange scholarships, Chinese culture, and language books alongside five ping pong tables.¹⁰¹ The United States and China have mutually benefitted from the city diplomacy. For instance, the US city of California agreed on low-carbon technology and climate governance effort

⁹⁶ Chinese People Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, <http://en.cpaaffc.org.cn>, accessed on August 6, 2019.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Mary Kane, "Let the First Strike be a Knock at the Door" *City Diplomacy*, 18 (Summer/Fall 2018): 20.

⁹⁹ "Houston to Hold U.S.-China Sister Cities Summit" *Xinhua News*, July 17, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Kane, "Let the First Strike be a Knock at the Door" 20.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

with Chinese cities. This effort would impact the lives of ordinary citizens across the continents.¹⁰² Chicago and Shanghai are known to be sister cities due to extensive metro networks.

City diplomacy has a huge impact on people-to-people communication, building informed opinions and deconstructing China's negative image. Initiatives similar to city diplomacy provide more information to ordinary Americans in an individual capacity, which may affect collective public opinion.¹⁰³ Another impact of city diplomacy is cross-cultural ties and societal interaction, where city-to-city engagement helps to change national perceptions. As argued by Herbert Kelman, conflict is not only a byproduct of interstate animosity but is significantly impacted by societal perception. In this context, city diplomacy provides a platform that could enable people-to-people contact, helping to mitigate anxieties and wariness, leading to structural change in perception.¹⁰⁴

DIASPORA DIPLOMACY

Foreign diaspora and students turned immigrants have an extended unrecognized component in relational diplomacy. These transnational movements have made enormous contributions to ethnic-public relations, cross-cultural awareness, and the transfer of ideas and values of their native lands to foreign countries.¹⁰⁵ China sees its diaspora as the gateway of communication. The first Chinese arrived in the United States in the 1820s. The second wave started in the 1970s after the normalization of US–China relations and is continued to the present. In the two waves of Chinese immigration, the population of Chinese Americans climbed up

¹⁰² Benjamin Leffel, "Sino-U.S. Sister City Relations: Subnational Networks and Paradiplomacy" *Rising Powers Quarterly*, 3:3 (May 2018): 113.

¹⁰³ Ben Page and Xie Tao, "American Public Opinion towards China: Policy Gap Between Leaders and Citizens" Department of Political Science, North Western University (May 2003): 4.

¹⁰⁴ Herbert C. Kelman, "The Nature of International Conflict: A Social Psychological Perspective" in Harvey J. Langholtz and Chris E. Stout, ed., *The Psychology of Diplomacy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004): 64–65.

¹⁰⁵ Seong-Hun Yun, "Relational Public Diplomacy: The Perspective of Sociological Globalism" *International Journal of Communication*, 6 (2012): 2200, 2205.

to 2.5 million in 2019.¹⁰⁶ This number currently touches approximately 5.3 million, 1.58% of Americans.¹⁰⁷ From living in ghettos and doing low-skilled jobs, Chinese Americans are among the most powerful immigrant lobby in the United States today. The Chinese diaspora is among the wealthiest well-educated foreign people, part of a strong business community doing white-collar jobs. The Americans no longer see Chinese as Yellow Peril, a long stereotype associated with the Chinese—the Chinese form an essential part of socioeconomic and political reality and flavor to American diversity. Chinese diaspora has been instrumental in pushing Chinese cultural imprints, especially CIs, language, and cuisines, among the American public. Presently, large numbers of Chinese immigrants are investor immigrants and student immigrants. According to data, between 2012 and 2015, around 28,000 Chinese obtained US EB-5 investor visas.¹⁰⁸ According to the Economist, in 2019, around 370,000 mainland Chinese were enrolled in American campuses.¹⁰⁹ Even though the foreign intake rate in American universities dropped during the Covid between 2019 and 2020, 380,000 Chinese students were enrolled in the US universities that year, accounting for 34% of all international students enrolled that year in the United States.¹¹⁰ According to a report by the Guardian, this number dropped to 15,000 students in 2023.¹¹¹ The steep decline resulted from President Trump's tirade against China

¹⁰⁶ "Chinese Immigrants in the United States" *Migration Policy Institute*, January 15, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states-2018>, accessed on December 13, 2020.

¹⁰⁷ "U.S. Census Bureau Releases Key Stats in Honor of 2023 Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month" *U.S. Department of Commerce*, May 1, 2023. [https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2023/05/us-census-bureau-releases-key-stats-honor-2023-asian-american-native-hawaiian-and#:~:text=5.2%20million,and%20Japanese%20\(1.6%20million\)](https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2023/05/us-census-bureau-releases-key-stats-honor-2023-asian-american-native-hawaiian-and#:~:text=5.2%20million,and%20Japanese%20(1.6%20million)).

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Goodkind, "The Chinese Diaspora: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Trends" United States Department of Commerce (August: 2019): 10.

¹⁰⁹ "Don't be Fooled by the Trade Deal between America and China" *The Economist*, January 2, 2020.

¹¹⁰ Gitnux, "The Most Surprising Chinese Students in US Statistics And Trends in 2023." Gitnux Market Data, Last edited: March 21, 2023. <https://blog.gitnux.com/chinese-students-in-us-statistics/>.

¹¹¹ Michael Coodier and Amy Hawkins, "US-China Cultural Exchange at Low Point After Tensions and Covid, Data Shows" *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/22/us-china-cultural-exchange-at-low-point-after-tensions-and-covid-data-shows>, accessed on July 25, 2023.

in 2017. However still, it makes Chinese students the largest group of international students studying in American universities and colleges. Traditionally, many of these students become part of the Chinese diaspora after completing their degrees at American universities.

Diaspora is also associated with political mobilization, particularly on issues concerning their native countries. For instance, the Sikh diaspora in Canada and Australia actively propagate the Khalistan movement in India. Or the 2010–2012 Arab Spring, the Arab diaspora protesting against authoritarian regimes in the United States and Europe. Indian diaspora. Similarly, in 2008, pro-China demonstrations were held in the United States, Europe, and Australia to support Tibet as part of the mainland leading up to the Beijing Olympics. Western media projected the protests as sponsored and tacitly approved by the Chinese government. However, surveys and interviews of the participant in pro-China rallies showed that the protestors had no support from the Chinese embassies and consulates. The demonstration displayed a new facet of Chinese overseas diaspora activism to support the mainland. Demonstrations also rectified the prevalent notion that all overseas Chinese are dissidents, anti-China, and involved in bashing the Chinese government. More so, the Chinese activism showcased ‘PD from the bottom’ as a grass root initiative to win global public opinion over China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.¹¹² Chinese activism in the United States showed the potential of non-state actors to play a significant role in shaping the country’s image. This is a testament to the power of engaged citizens in shaping public opinion.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Exchange programs are instrumental in cultivating long-term relationships. China has developed many public and public–private partnership forums to facilitate educational and cultural exchanges between China and the United States. For instance, the US-China Education Exchange is a nonprofit body that organizes various education exchange programs such as Teach in China Program, China Tours, Teacher Exchange Programs, Study in China, and Pre-Teaching EFL Certificate Training Course.¹¹³

¹¹² Barry Sautman and Li Ying, “Public Diplomacy from Below: The 2008 “Pro-China” Demonstrations in Europe and North America” *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*, 11 (December 2011): 10–11.

¹¹³ “US-China Educational Exchange.” <http://us-chinaedexchange.org>, accessed on March 30, 2020.

Similarly, the China Educational Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) is a non-profit organization based in Beijing which provides teachers from major English-speaking countries the opportunity to live and work in China for twelve months. The CEAIE has many programs aimed at promoting cultural people-to-people contact between China and the United States, which includes US-China Friendship Volunteers, ITERO Intercultural Experiences, and Short-Term Overseas Professional training, which provides opportunities to technical and managerial Chinese professionals to visit developing countries, including United States.¹¹⁴ Another program funded by China is the 12 days Summer Travel and Teaching Program (SCTNTP), aimed at US-China cultural exchange and EFL education in China.¹¹⁵ In September 2017, the 'US-China Education Exchange initiated the first US-China Social and Cultural Dialogue (SCD) in seven areas of cooperation, including education, social development, science and technology, health, subnational, arts and culture, and environment and conservation.'¹¹⁶ The purpose of the dialogue was to maintain existing bilateral cooperation while exploring more expansive areas of collaboration between the two countries. At the time, China accounted for around one-third of international students studying in American Universities.¹¹⁷ Multiple prestigious universities and research institutions in the United States collaborate with the People's Republic of China. In 2010, the China-US Journalists Exchange Program was initiated to enhance journalistic collaboration between China and the United States. Around 100 American Journalists have participated in this program.¹¹⁸ The Journalist exchange program aims to improve public understanding about the culture, society, and political systems of China and the United States.

¹¹⁴ "China Educational Association for International Exchange." <http://en.ceaie.edu.cn>, accessed on March 21, 2020.

¹¹⁵ "Summer China Teaching and Travel Program (SCTNTP)." www.summerchinatravelandteachingprogram.org, accessed on April 10, 2020.

¹¹⁶ "US-China Social and Cultural Dialogue, U.S. Department of State." <https://www.state.gov>, accessed on April 5, 2020.

¹¹⁷ Robert Delaney, "How America's Embrace of Chinese Culture Boosts Beijing's Soft Power" *South China Morning Post*, September 28, 2017.

¹¹⁸ East West Center "China-United States Journalists Exchange." <https://www.eastwestcenter.org>, accessed on September 11, 2019.

However, in 2020 Many Chinese media outlets were designated the same as foreign embassies in the United States, limiting the operation of leading Chinese media outlets in the United States. The diplomatic spat resulted in the expulsion of US journalists from China. In November 2021, after the Xi-Biden virtual Summit, specified news agencies were allowed to work collaboratively. However, very few visas have been issued to journalists since then.

CONCLUSION

Due to the divergent ideological, political, and sociocultural attributes exhibited by nations such as the United States and China, the task of fostering a productive rapport between them is deemed to be intricate. Evidently, there has been a substantial transformation in the American populace's perception of China yet these perceptions are fluid and largely subject to the bilateral political relations. The favorable view of China among Americans peaked in 2017 but has steadily declined since then. The Covid-19 outbreak has been pivotal in negatively impacting American attitudes toward China after China was blamed for handling the pandemic. The negative American public opinion of China can be attributed to various factors, including concerns about human rights and China's close alliance with Russia under Xi Jinping's administration.

Chinese ability to cultivate stronger ties during these times seems a far cry. Nonetheless, cultural ties and relationship building is a long-term effort necessitating consistent networking and social capital investment with foreign nations. Relational diplomacy is the most critical tool employed by Chinese public diplomacy, mainly for three decades during its global economic and political influence expansion.

China is committed to keeping cultural diplomacy at the forefront of its efforts to build relationships with the American public. The previous commitment toward building relationships through elite visits, cultural exchanges, CIs, education and language training, diaspora diplomacy, and collaboration of twin cities are proof of Chinese seriousness in cultivating stronger ties with the American people. Through these activities, China actively seeks to alter the American public's perception and leadership regarding China's rise. All the relational activities play vital roles in the economy, education, politics, and innovation, contributing to overcoming any narrow or myopic views about China.

In hindsight, relational diplomacy could enable China to increase its soft power, establish intercultural connections, overcome negative perceptions, and address more contentious geopolitical issues. Cultural diplomacy is the cornerstone of Chinese integrated public diplomacy in the United States. It reflects its fundamental importance in China's efforts to engage with and shape perceptions in the American public sphere.



Impact of China's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in the United States: An Assessment

Since the inception of formal diplomatic relations between the United States and China in 1979, several studies have been conducted to understand how the public from each country views the image of the other country. In the United States, data gathered by leading survey agencies are part of many quantitative studies to gauge American public views on China.¹ Since the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, American public attitudes about China have fluctuated and been influenced by international developments during the Cold War, such as the ideological conflict between democracy and communism, geopolitical interests, and human rights concerns. During the 1950s and 1960s, American public perception became correspondingly low due to the Korean War (1950–1953) and the negative image of the Communist block among Western countries.² In the 1970s and 1980s, China's opening up through market reforms improved American perception. However, China was viewed antithetical as an undemocratic communist state. During the 1990s, due to its economic development, China

¹ Public opinion survey by Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends, Gallup, and Chicago Council of Global Affairs, are part of research studies to assess American Public opinion regarding China.

² Matthew S. Hirshberg, "Consistency and Change in American Perceptions of China" *Political Behavior*, 1:3 (1993): 247.

was viewed as a rapidly developing country with remarkably improved human development indicators. China's image among the American public remained steadily balanced during the two subsequent decades.

Keeping in view of the requirement of the study, a leading survey agency (Survey Monkey) was approached to conduct an online survey via random sampling through an online questionnaire titled 'How American Public Views China,' in May 2020. The survey was carried out during a period of escalating Covid pandemic cases, and during this time, the American perspective toward China was notably unfavorable. Preceding the survey, the Trump administration, which had been in power for three years, experienced a period of tension in the bilateral relations between the United States and China. President Trump's public references to the 'Wuhan Virus' and 'China Virus' significantly contributed to a negative public perception of China. In the year 2020, the Trump Administration undertook over 200 measures pertaining to China, framing them as comprehensive actions across various government departments. The policies pursued by the administration in relation to China had a substantial impact on the collective public sentiment.

This survey is designed with the primary objective of comprehending the perceptions held by the American populace regarding various aspects related to China's PD activities within the United States, and how these activities influence China's image among the American public. In alignment with the central inquiries of this research and the overarching discussions within the chapters encompassing nation branding, mediated public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy, the survey questions were thoughtfully formulated. Their purpose is to discern the attitudes of the American public toward China's PD endeavors conducted within the United States. Nevertheless, after a span of three years subsequent to this initial survey, it becomes pertinent to juxtapose the current American perspectives on China with those observed at the time of the survey.

Research and academic discourse are often based on the assumption that China's rise is significant to the American public, while many of these studies lack empirical data.³ Moreover, most public opinion surveys are based on questions on foreign policy issues where the masses have

³ John Aldrich, Jie Lu and Kang Liu, "How do American Vies the Rise of China" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 24:92 (March 2015):4; Benjamin Page and Tao Xie, *Living with the Dragon How the American Public Views the Rise of China* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2010).

a rather litter objective understanding. The multiple-choice answers are assessed on favorable or unfavorable feelings based on general liking or dislike toward China. Data obtained through such surveys is a valuable evaluation to assess the general aptitude of Americans toward a nation. This survey is designed to put forth questions to assess how Americans view China's public diplomacy-based activities and their impact on public perception of China.

One primary purpose of this research is to determine the role of culture, media, and branding as elements of PD in forming and shaping public perception. Existing research on public opinion suggests that American perception is influenced by information coming through mass media.⁴ Also, public predispositions play a significant role in forming American public opinion.⁵ Unfortunately, while answering public opinion surveys on China, the American public primarily takes American media as a source of information; therefore, the opinion is subject to a negative projection of China, resulting in unfavorable opinions. Similarly, the difference in political ideology also sways American public opinion—favorable toward liberal societies and unfavorable toward non-liberal societies. Negative perceptions are further aggravated if the nation is economically or militarily competing with the United States. Similarly, Americans tend to be less receptive to immigrants from certain nations, especially those with less cultural similarities leading to racial discrimination.

Contemporary narrative on China in the American media is designed to project threats from China, such as Coronavirus deliberately perpetrated by China; China is taking American jobs, theft of American intellectual property, and human rights violations. These issues have significant leverage to influence the American public perception of China. During the American Presidential campaigns, China became a major

⁴ Danny Hayes and Matthew Guardino, "The Influence of Foreign Voices on U.S. Public Opinion" *American Journal of Political Science*, 55:4 (October 2011): 830.

⁵ R. Michael Alvarez and John Brehm, *Hard Choices, Easy Answers: Values, Information, and American Public Opinion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002):16; John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1992); John Zaller and Stanley Feldman, "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences" *American Journal of Political Science*, 36:3 (August 1992): 579–616.

Table 7.1 Mechanical turk sample

	<i>Respondent size</i>	<i>Participants (%)</i>	<i>Mode of interview</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Income group</i>	<i>Regions</i>
Male	95	50	Online questioner	18–100	\$0–\$200,000	All regions
Female	94	50	Online questioner	18–100	\$0–\$200,000	All Regions

Note All the respondents answered the surveyed pool in the stipulated time. **Margin of error:** +/-7.274%

foreign policy issue creating anxiety and attracting widespread public attention.⁶ Therefore, political rhetoric often influences voters on both sides of the political divide toward framing China as a major foreign policy issue (Table 7.1).

HOW DOES AMERICAN PUBLIC VIEW CHINA?

In an academic context, the survey’s random samples were drawn from various geographical areas across the United States. The survey encompassed a demographic representation of both genders (male and female), age groups spanning from 18 to 100 years old, and a range of income levels from \$0 to \$200,000. The survey involved 189 participants, hailing from diverse occupational backgrounds. Prior to exploring American perspectives on China, it was crucial to ascertain respondents’ interest in news and information concerning China. Only those who expressed consent to participate were given the questionnaire to respond to.

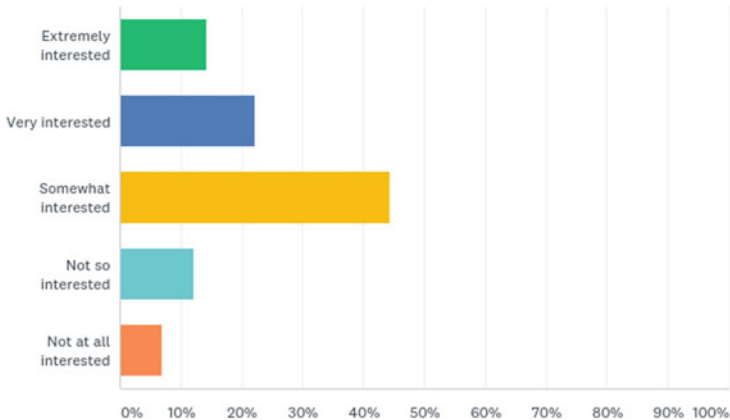
The first question was imperative toward comprehending the level of public interest pertaining to China, and to layout the foundation for the subsequent inquiry into Chinese PD and the American perspective on China. This primary query encompassed a range of five tiers, stretching from ‘Extremely Interested’ to ‘Not Interested at All.’ The ensuing two inquiries were aimed at assessing the extent of influence exerted by Chinese mass communication media and social media platforms on the American populace. These inquiries aimed to understand the sources of information regarding China and to gauge the extent to which

⁶ Leigh Ann Caldwell, “Romney latest to lob China criticism” *CBS News*, September 25, 2012.

China-mediated public diplomacy was making inroads into the United States. The fourth and fifth questions centered on matters of culture, a pivotal instrument within Chinese relational public diplomacy. Given the paramount importance that China accords to cultural diplomacy within its PD strategy, these two questions aimed to gauge the influence of Chinese culture on the perceptions of the American public.

The subsequent set of questions provided valuable insights into China's nation branding endeavors. This entailed understanding the American public's perceptions of products bearing the 'Made-in-China' label, as well as their inclinations toward travel to China. These inquiries were embedded within the broader framework of nation branding. Queries eight and nine prompted respondents to express their viewpoints concerning China, while question ten was artfully framed to solicit perspectives from the American public concerning potential trajectories in US-China relations.

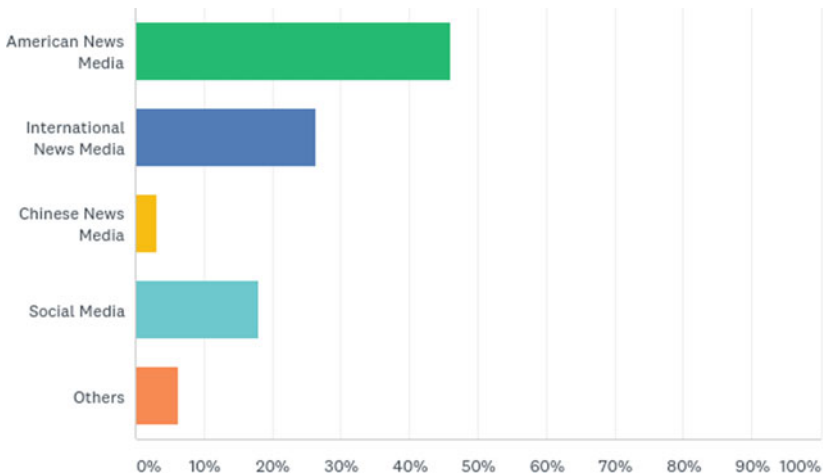
Q-1: Are you interested in News or Information about China?



The first question inquired about the respondents' interest in news and information about China, of which 79% of the respondents recognized interest in news and information about China. More than 14% of Americans were extremely interested in news about China, whereas, 22.22% were very interested and 44.44% were somewhat interested in China-related news. This question doesn't suggest that the participants are

concerned about China's political spectrum or China-US relations, as PD's focus is broader than just politics. The larger number of participants showing interest in China offers a more unbiased understanding of how the general public thinks about China. This also illustrates China's growing significance among the American populace, extending beyond political aspects, as evident in the subsequent question. The widespread media coverage of China, China-US trade ties, and a growing diaspora presence have heightened the American public's curiosity about China.

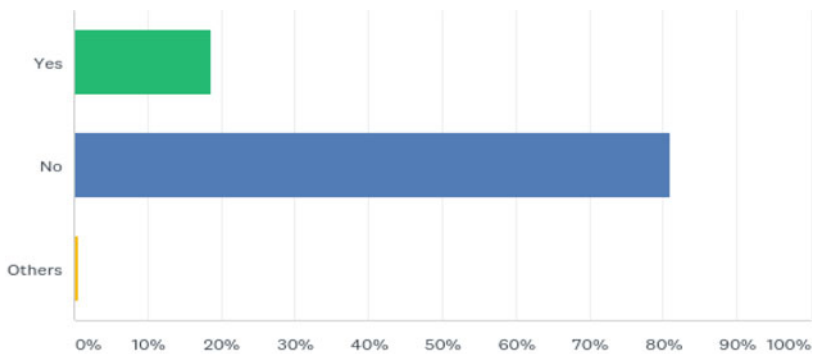
Q-2: What is your source of getting news on China?



The next question on the source of getting news from China aims to investigate the influence of Chinese news media footprints and its viewership in the United States. This question corresponds to Chapter 4 on Chinese Mediated PD in the United States. More than 46% of the respondents answered that their source of getting news on China is the American news media. Numerous studies and literature have shown that American media greatly influences fomenting public opinion. This survey corresponds to the fact that the American public mainly relies on indigenous news media, including radio, TV News Broadcasts, and newspapers, as a source of information and news on China. Social media exponentially influences public opinion formation, where 18% of Americans gather

news and information regarding China. Less than 4% of respondents get their news from Chinese news sources, which shows the limitations of China's media in attracting viewership in the United States. The international news media is dominated by Western media channels such as *BBC*, *DW*, and *France24*, which mostly corresponds to the American media narrative on China. Nevertheless, the result of the question shows that most Americans have a keen interest in news and information on China. The responses by the American public also outline the limitation on China to frame a positive image among the American public through mediated communication and media.

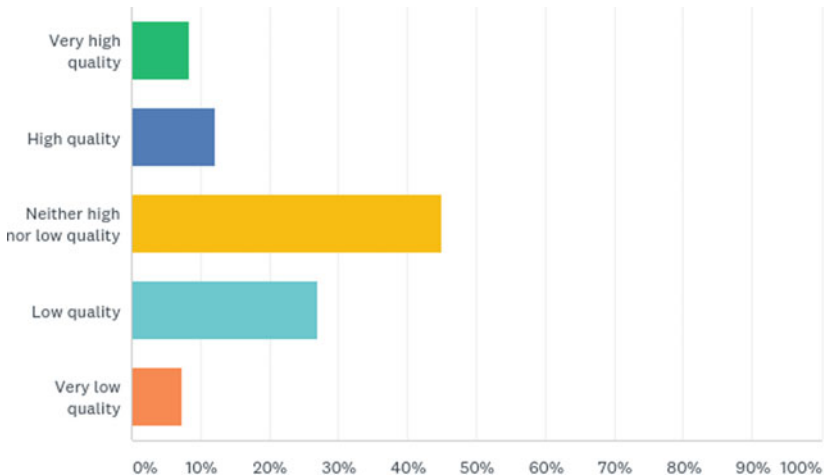
Q-3: Do you use any Chinese Social Media or news media apps?



The next question links Chapter 4 to the debate on mediated PD to ascertain the influence of Chinese footprints through social media and the virtual sphere. Only 18.5% of respondents acknowledged using news media or social media applications. Though the numbers are considerably lower, it shows that cyberspace is more penetrable and effective for connecting with the foreign public than traditional news media. The younger population, especially, is more exposed to online content and social media applications. China's escalating prominence within the cyber realm has the potential to establish a more substantial avenue for engagement with the American populace. Nonetheless, empirical evidence also underscores that a significant 80% of participants abstain from utilizing

any Chinese social or news media applications. This statistic underscores the necessity for heightened focus within the cyber domain on orchestrated public diplomacy efforts to yield desired outcomes. One key inquiry of this study pertains to the ramifications of ‘Mediated public diplomacy in shaping its prioritized subjects among the United States audience.’ The survey outcomes indicate a moderate influence of China’s orchestrated PD within this sphere.

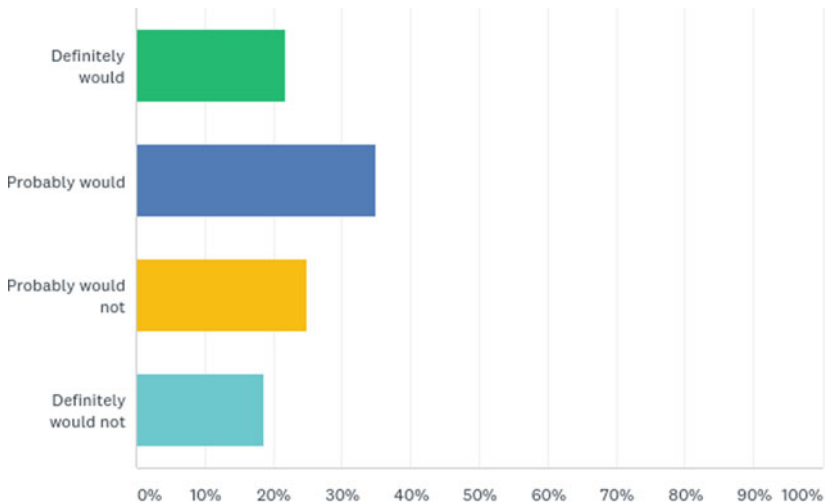
Q-4: What do you think about ‘Made-in-China’ products?



Chapter 6 explores China’s nation branding in the United States. China is the leading manufacturing economy and made in China, consumer products have a huge market in the United States. Question six asks the respondents about the quality of Made-in-China products. Most consumer products, from toys to electrical appliances in the United States, are made in China. This question reveals the American public’s trust in ‘Brand China.’ Around 20% of respondents showed a high level of trust in Made-in-China products. A higher number, 45% of Americans, believe Chinese products are neither very high quality nor very low

quality, whereas more than 34% did not approve Made-in-China products. It is interesting to note that most of the products made in China are only manufactured in China using Western technology. The recent voices of protectionism and deteriorating trade relations between the United States and China could have added distrust of Made-in-China products. While some studies show that the Americans have been showing the cold shoulder to Made-in-China products, the American producers couldn't provide an alternative. One big impediment is President Trump's decision to put a blanket ban on Chinese imports as it would hurt the American economy.

Q-5: If you can, would you like to visit China for tourism or recreational activities?



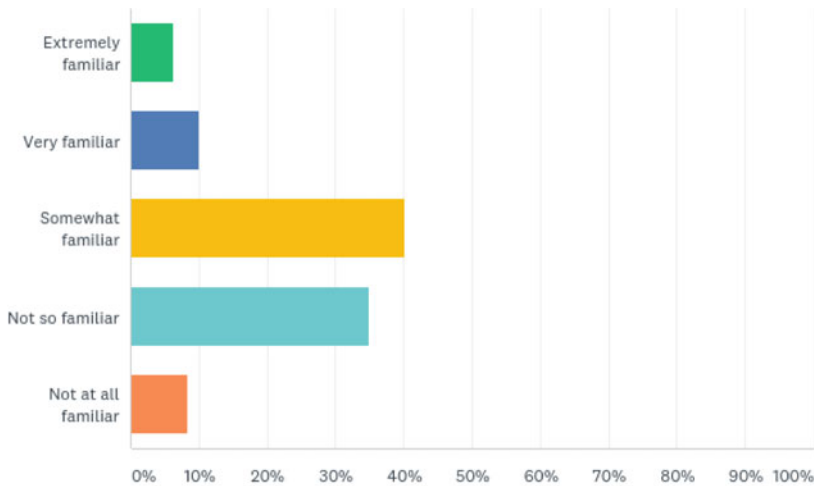
China's nation branding is central to public diplomacy. Tourism and inbound traveling are an important part of China's image projection. This question corresponds to Chapter 5 on nation branding. This question asked the respondents if they would like to travel to China for tourism

and recreational activities. As China is one of the leading tourist destinations, this question relates to the confidence in traveling to China amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing economic and military concerns regarding China. More than 55% of Americans approved of traveling to China, whereas 45% were either reluctant or not willing to travel to China. China's investment in promoting tourism has attracted foreign tourists by becoming the fourth largest tourist destination visited by 65.7 million visitors in 2019. The successful growth of China's tourism industry is attributed to the diversity of ancient and modern cultural fusion. China has branded its cultural diversity with strategic taglines such as 'Beautiful China' and 'China like Never Before,' and 'Come and You will Never Leave.' Likewise, China has also branded its provinces to attract international tourism. Most social media content for branding advertises tourists' destinations. Phrases such as 'Up in heaven, there is paradise; down on earth, there are Suzhou and Hangzhou,'⁷ 'Hawaii of the Orient' for Zhaoqing in Guangdong Province, and 'Oriental Geneva' for Sanya in Hainan Province⁸ are carefully crafted to attract the attention of travel enthusiasts. China's successful organization of three mega events (the Beijing Olympics 2008, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games) have also brought China's tourist attractions to global attention. The study's research question on 'What are the effects of Chinese nation branding campaigns in improving Chinese national image in the United States?' shows that Brand China has made fair approval ratings among the American audience.

⁷ Zhang Hui et al., "The Effects of Associative Slogans on Tourists Attitudes and Travel Intention: The Moderating Effects of Need for Cognition and Familiarity" *Journal of Research*, 56:2 (2016): 207.

⁸ Li Yan-qin and Wu Bi-hu, "A Study on the Mechanism and Creating Models of Tourism Advertising Theme" *Tourism Tribune*, 19:1 (2004): 82–86.

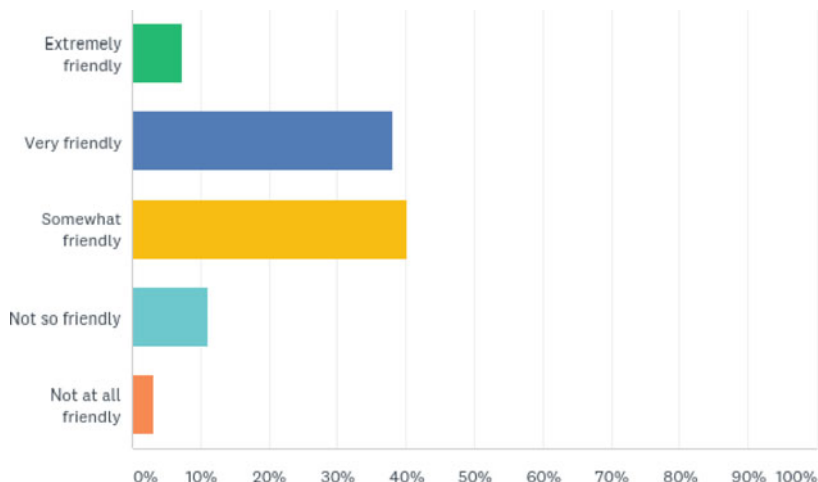
Q-6: Are you familiar with Chinese culture and traditions?



Notable studies and surveys have focused more on understanding the cultural aspect of China's soft power and influence on foreign publics. Cultural diplomacy is fundamental to China's relational diplomacy and soft power. Confucius institutes, language training, and cultural exhibitions are part of wide-ranging activities representing China's cultural presence on American soil. Around 56% of respondents maintained that they have various degrees of familiarity with Chinese culture ranging from extremely familiar to somewhat familiar. Because cultural heritage remains a pivotal element of China's soft power projection, the extent of American public's acquaintance with Chinese culture holds significant value as a measurable parameter to assess the efficacy of relational public diplomacy. Additionally, from China's perspective, the degree of cultural familiarity that American people possess regarding Chinese cultural aspects has the potential to exert a favorable impact on image and perception among the targeted audience.

This takes us to the next question about the likability of Chinese culture among the American public, which is imperative for China to improve its national image.

Q-7: How do you see Chinese cultural activities in the United States?



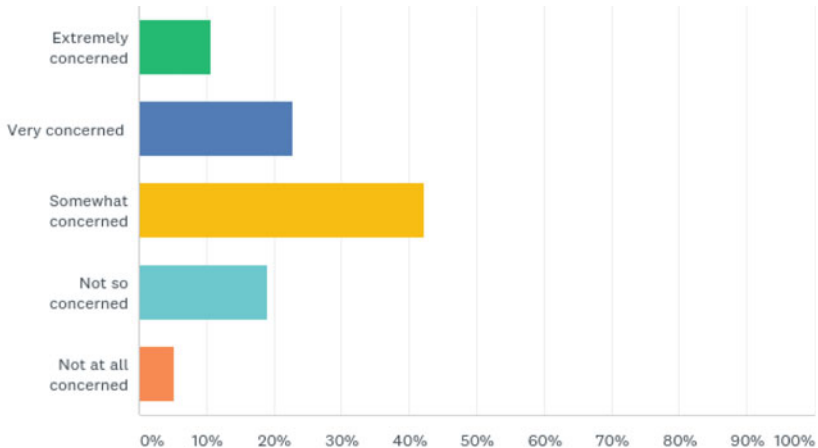
Chinese cultural activities in the United States provide a better understanding of the cultural impact of PD and soft power. Out of the total, 7.1% of respondents see China's cultural activities as extremely friendly, whereas 38.1% and 40.2% see China as very friendly and somewhat friendly, respectively. In total, around 85% favorable view of China's cultural activity is an endorsement of China's cultural attractiveness in the United States. China has crafted its cultural diplomacy with a blend of historical civilization, classical thought, and acceptable cultural corpus to promote its soft power.⁹ Promotion of Buddhist thought in the form of Confucius Institutes, Chinese diaspora, student exchanges, Panda diplomacy, and organization of cultural events have been instrumental in China's relational diplomacy. China's cultural exports to the United

⁹ Alessandra Cappelletti, "The "Construction" of Chinese Culture in a Globalized World and its Importance for Beijing's Smart Power: Notes and Concepts on a Narrative Shift" *Working Papers on East Asian Studies*, 115, (2017): 18.

States, such as movies, novels, statutes, paintings, and art and craft, have remarkably increased, adding value to China's cultural outlook among the American public.

The research question is 'What are the effects of Chinese relational diplomacy in bridging the gap between the Chinese and American public?' Chinese cultural diplomacy has arguably shown the most promising results among the three aspects of PD with higher approval of Chinese relational aspects of diplomacy and acceptance of Chinese culture among the American masses.

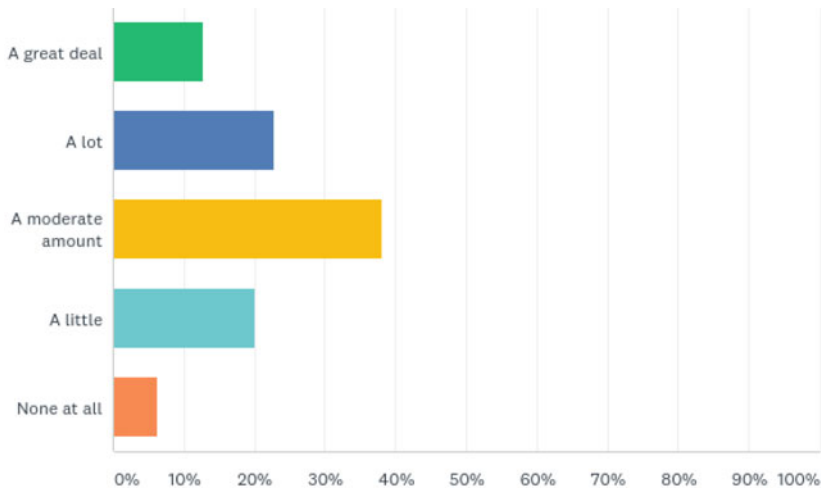
Q-8: Are you concerned about China's economic and military rise?



China's economic and military rise is a concern aggressively shared by the American political elite and academia. Chapter 3 gives a detailed account of the rise of China and the China Threat in Western political discourse. Therefore, the respondents were asked if they shared the same concerns about China's economic and military rise. Data shows that most of the American public is extremely to moderately concerned with the rise of China. Many other surveys have shown that respondents are more concerned about how the American government should deal with China than the 'Rise of China.' Nevertheless, 75% of Americans look at China's rise with a concern could have a major impact on the US foreign policy toward China. Many other studies, such as Pew and Gallup, have shown a wide range of discrepancies in the American public view on China before

and after the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in the Wuhan district of China. The empirical data shows that China's approval has dropped from 44% to a new low of 22% in the United States.

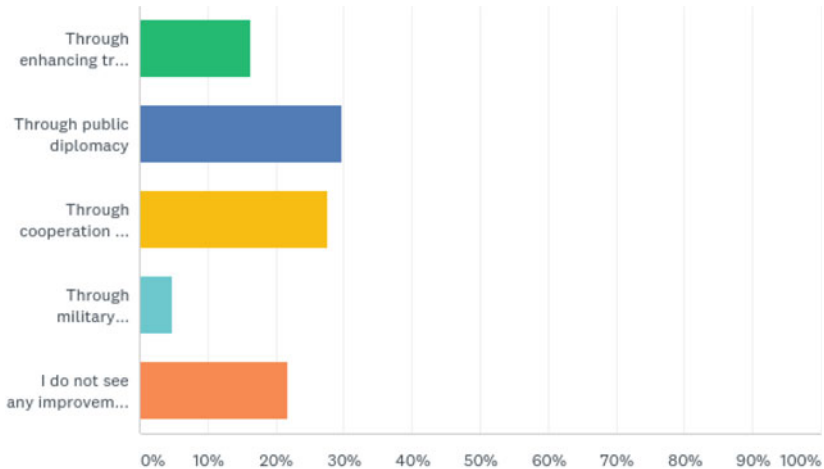
Q-9: Do you see China as a military or economic threat to the United States?



On the question 'Do you see China as a military or economic threat to the United States?' around the same percentage of respondents who saw China's rise as a concern saw China as a military or economic threat to the United States. Existing empirical data on China's public opinion pools has shown that China's military rise is a greater concern for Americans, which corresponds to the military buildup in the South China Sea. Similarly, the communist ideology, China's maritime disputes with Japan and support for North Korea are major factors that project military concern for the American public. Only 25% of Americans believe China could not threaten the United States with a military or economic threat. The results of questions 8 and 9 reflect growing suspicion of China's economic and military rise among the US public. American concerns

ranging from geopolitical issues to allegedly unfair trade practices show that anti-Chinese attitudes are gaining momentum in the United States. Such perceptions can seriously undermine the social capital that Chinese PD built over the last three decades.

Q-10: Do you see improvement in US–China relations in the future?



As most public opinion pools are susceptible to the changing geopolitical environment, the next question aims at ascertaining the future trajectory of US–China relations. The question asks the respondents if they see improvement in US–China relations in the future. Around 22% of the American public sees no improvement in US–China relations in the future. The other option included improving relations through enhancing trade, public diplomacy, cooperation at the multilateral forums and military cooperation. Responses show that around 30% of Americans believe PD is vital for improving relations between China and the United States. Whereas 27% of Americans feel that cooperation at multilateral forums could benefit improved relations, more than 16% believed that trade is a gateway to improvement in US–China relations. This question shows great trust in people-to-people contact and PD in changing perception and reducing trust deficit among the American public vis-à-vis China. Approval of improvement in relations through collaboration at

the multilateral forums also supports the role of diplomacy on the global stage.

The purpose of this survey was to take a systematic view to understand how the American public views China through its PD practices. The quantitative data gathered from the survey shows that the American public is cognizant of China's growing economic and military clout and its rise has implications for the United States. An evaluation of Chinese PD provided mixed results. Despite cultural dissimilarities between American and Chinese cultures, surprisingly, Americans are more aware than ever of Chinese culture, whereas Chinese cultural activities are considerably favored among the masses. Chinese news media and social media are not popular information mediums among Americans.

The following conclusion can be reached from the data collected. First, the respondents were more interested in American and international news sources for gathering information about China than Chinese news sources. This has implications for the public perspective regarding China and subsequent attitudes. Secondly, on the cultural front, Americans seem more receptive to Chinese culture and cultural activities. So, the cultural aspect of PD is more popular and could effectively improve China's perception among the American public. Third, Chinese data on national branding provided mixed results, as Americans were more interested in visiting China than in using Chinese make products. Fifth, Americans see China as a concern and possible threat to the United States economically and militarily, contributing to a negative perception of China. Nevertheless, most respondents see improvement in US-China relations through public diplomacy, trade, and cooperation at multilateral forums. It would be important to conduct future studies on the American public perception of China to assess opinions' stability over time as public opinion is susceptible to change.

Respondents appear to hold the belief that diplomacy, trade, and cooperation within multilateral forums can pave the way for an amelioration of bilateral relations. This indicates a recognition of the potential benefits that could accrue from joint efforts and constructive engagement between the two nations on a global stage. However, it is important to acknowledge the dynamic nature of public opinion. The data underscores the susceptibility of public perceptions to change over time, highlighting the need for ongoing research to track the stability of these opinions. As geopolitical landscapes evolve and new developments emerge, public

sentiment can shift, underscoring the necessity for continuous analysis and adaptation of strategies aimed at shaping perceptions.

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of the collected data provides a comprehensive understanding of the American public's perspective on China. By recognizing the nuances in media consumption, cultural affinity, economic views, security concerns, and prospects for diplomatic advancement, policymakers and stakeholders can formulate targeted strategies to enhance mutual understanding, dispel misperceptions, and foster positive relations between China and the United States.

CONCLUSION

The past few decades have seen exponential growth in the theory and practice of PD. The contribution of academic scholarship has enabled policymakers to understand the dividends of PD in pursuing foreign policy objectives. In addition, there is a growing realization that foreign publics are as important as governments in the realm of diplomacy. Diplomacy has thus transformed into a relationship management strategy in which foreign publics are the primary stakeholders, which influence foreign policies of their respective states.

The role of PD as a soft power tool has expanded to influence the foreign public to create strategic narratives. Since the global economic recession of 2008, the narrative surrounding the Rise of China amidst the US decline is the most debated topic of contemporary international politics. Understandably, the ‘Rise of China’ as a threat, has permeated in the US political discourse as a major foreign policy issue. The 2017 National Security Strategy constituted China as a competition both in economic and military spheres. China has responded by establishing a strategic narrative of ‘Peaceful Development’ vis-à-vis its Rise as a great power to assuage American concerns vis-à-vis its rise.

China’s proffers a foreign policy aimed at fostering a Harmonious World through ‘Peaceful Development’ without explicitly challenging the prevailing US-centric international system. Despite this objective, external perceptions of China present a complex narrative influenced by various factors, including temporal and spatial considerations. When

examining the perspective of the US public, China faces a significant challenge rooted in historical misunderstandings, leading to its portrayal as an emerging threat that confronts American geopolitical, economic, and military dominance. Although there has been a noticeable improvement in China's perception among the US public since the Cold War, it continues to be viewed with suspicion, often framed in the media as a communist state concerning human rights issues and criticized for unfair trade practices and perceived ulterior geo-economic ambitions. Arguably, the US public opinion is swayed by elite media discourse through news stories on mass and social media framing China's Rise as ominous. Such projection has real-time consequences on the US public opinion about China. The biggest downside for China is that despite huge investments in soft power and PD in the United States, the trust deficit among the US public persists. Through media cascading, contentious political/ideological, economic, and military/security issues pertaining to China are highlighted. On the ideational front, anti-Chinese news that criticizes China's image as a communist regime with little regard for human rights, especially toward minorities, is a regular feature in the US media discourse. Newsfeeds on human rights issues, the plight of Uyghur Muslims, the Tibet region, the Hong Kong unrest, and the Covid Spillover had been the main featured news on China. China is framed as a state dismissive of liberal values such as free speech, freedom of information, and political liberties, where the capitalist economic reforms did not materialize in political dividends as anticipated by the US political elite. Security considerations are atop the US view of China. Allegations of cyber-theft and cyber-economic espionage, threats to the US allies in the South China Sea through military buildup, and China's aggressive posture on the Taiwan Strait are major security issues framed to display China as a threat to the US national security.

The economic dimensions of China's threat focus on the growing trade deficit, Chinese taking over the US jobs, intellectual property theft, currency manipulation and dumping, and other unfair economic practices. A trade war ensued during the tenure of President Trump in 2017. Incrementally, intensifying the US-China economic standoff has resulted in banning many Chinese companies and media outlets operating in the United States and imposing billions of dollars in tariffs on Chinese goods. The US news coverage of the US-China trade war has further tainted China's image in the US media, which has triggered an upward China threat perception in the US public. On the other hand, China's economic

success, industrial modernization, and a successful developmental state model are mostly ignored or presented in a hollow manner in the US media. The present trend of unfavorable projections of China in the US media will likely persist in the foreseeable future.

This research argues that China's PD strategy could positively influence public perception of China and help neutralize anti-China sentiments in the United States. Though China is relatively novice in many areas of public diplomacy, it is steadily moving up the ladder. China has approached PD as a comprehensive multilayered strategy, which employs requisite tools of public relationship through communication and relationship building to pursue national objectives. Using contemporary PD to present a countervailing narrative is important to deconstruct negative perceptions about China. Chinese PD connects soft power resources to the targeted audience. The difficulty of applying soft power to foreign audiences is arduous, which can only be facilitated with a comprehensive PD strategy. Moreover, PD resonates as the primary instrument of soft power to project a new image of a candid, peaceful, civilized, and progressive Chinese state.

This study has conceptualized China's PD in a three-tier approach, including mediated public diplomacy, relational diplomacy, and nation branding campaigns and mediated through mass media framing an alternative viewpoint to readers, listeners, and viewers, forming society's wider strata. In the international opinionated environment, states need consistent communication to engage the foreign audience to shape narratives and opinions. The economic and military rise necessitated China to engage with the US public to see China through an alternative lens. Though the US-China economic and political engagement has seen exponential growth in the last two decades, a few US citizens have traveled to China and have limited insight into China's sociopolitical landscape. The majority of the US public are influenced by online and offline media, which shapes their opinion on major foreign policy issues. China sees mediated diplomacy as instrumental in improving its soft power. The expansion of Chinese Media outlets has not been received well by the US government. Until October 2020, fifteen Chinese media companies were designated foreign missions in the United States and would come under strict scrutiny. Despite the burgeoning growth of Chinese media companies in the United States, most Americans rely on US news sources on foreign policy issues, including US-China relations. However, the growing numbers of Americans using social media platforms are now

more exposed to alternative sources of newsfeeds. Chinese news channels operating through social media have more access to the US public to present alternative viewpoints on China. Similarly, Chinese embassies and consulates in the United States use social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to connect with the US public to pursue Mediated Public Diplomacy.

China endeavors in the second tier of IPD namely the Nation branding applies marketing techniques to build several aspects of the country's image, such as exports, investment, tourism, culture, and heritage. China's soft power demonstrated through nation branding is still in the formative phase. Successful branding depends upon years of trust and cultivating social capital through trustworthiness and likability. Most Americans are still wary of using Made-in-China products even though most consumer products used by American households are made in China. Chinese marketing of 'Made in China' has been getting noticed in the United States; however, its impact on consumer behavior is hard to ascertain. But most Americans showed interest in visiting China for tourism and recreational purposes. The cultural impact of Chinese civilization depicted through Chinese festivals, films, and panda diplomacy has developed a more positive image among Americans.

The third tier of IPD namely the relational diplomacy incorporates efforts toward long-term engagement and building social capital with foreign publics through exchanges and people-to-people contact. Relational diplomacy, which entails cultural diplomacy as a major influence, has been the bedrock of Chinese PD in the United States. The cultural institutes, exchange programs, festivals, exhibitions, and export of cultural goods have received higher approval from the US public. The strong Chinese diaspora forms an important cultural footprint that has played an important role in the overall national progress of the United States. Chinese diaspora represents the culture, traditions, and key elements of Chinese civilization in the United States. Similarly, since the inception of US-China bilateral relations, Chinese leadership visits have been atop the relational aspect of public diplomacy. Relational diplomacy, therefore, forms the principal tool to educate the American masses about Chinese culture and worldviews and addresses the distrust emanating from the rise of China.

The survey conducted for this study revealed a higher familiarity and approval rate of the US public regarding Chinese cultural activities in the United States. A higher approval of Chinese cultural diplomacy is an

admission of dividends resulting from decades of cultural capital invested in the United States. The survey assessing US public perception resonates with China's PD efforts. China's relational diplomacy is more attractive and receives a more favorable projection of China's image. China still lacks mediated PD as Americans have shown less interest in Chinese sources to gather news and information about China. Similarly, China needs to change its perception of Made-in-China products. Nevertheless, respondents were more open to visiting China as it has become a major tourism destination for Americans.

Lastly, the United States and China are undergoing a historical period in their bilateral relations. China has attracted states and the public to its emerging power role globally. Chinese soft power has been appealing to many across the globe, yet more air needs to be clear about China's future role in global politics. Mostly the misgivings among the US public are caused by a lack of understanding about China's cultural projection and historical journey from an underdeveloped to a modern developing country. PD aims to project China as a civilized, modern, and peacefully responsible state which abides by the existing norms of engagement in global politics. The stressful environment caused by the Rise of China could only be dispelled through a constructive public diplomacy-based engagement to promote cultural understanding and support people-to-people contact between the United States and China.

The questions posed to address the effectiveness of Chinese PD in attaining the objective of cultivating a positive Chinese image among the American public and dispelling the rise of China have been answered throughout the discussion in this study. However, while acknowledging the role of PD in promoting friendly relations between countries, one must remember that PD is a continuous process and developing a successful interactive framework to resonate all the requirements of a successful diplomacy strategy is an uphill task. It would be naive to conclude that Chinese PD has achieved the underline objective in pursuing the stated objectives; however, China's efforts to be more trusted and understood by the foreign public have become more objective and innovative. The way forward from this predicament for China is to educate the US public about the progression of China into a modern state with a rich history and cultural heritage. A vivid understanding of the contemporary Chinese state and society would deconstruct negative connotations attached to China's past and unveil new perspectives, imperative for the future course of the US–China bilateral relations.

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